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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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DEATH'S DENIAL AND SAVITRI'S ASSERTION

IMMUTABLE, Death's denial met her cry:
"However mighty, whatever thy secret name
Uttered in hidden conclave of the gods,
Thy heart's ephemeral passion cannot break
The iron rampart of accomplished things
With which the great Gods fence their camp in Space.
Whoever thou art behind thy human mask,
Even if thou art the Mother of the worlds
And peggst thy claim upon the realms of Chance,
The cosmic Law is greater than thy will.
Even God himself obeys the Laws he made...
All things hang here between God's yes and no,
Two Powers real but to each other untrue,
Two consort stars in the mooned night of mind
That towards two opposite horizons gaze,
The white head and black tail of the mystic drake,
The swift and the lame foot, wing strong, wing broken
Sustaining the body of the uncertain world,
A great surreal dragon in the skies....
All in this world is true, yet all is false...
Truth has no home in earth's irrational breast...
Eternal truth lives not with mortal men.
Or if she dwells within thy mortal heart,
Show me the body of the living Truth
Or draw for me the outline of her face
That I too may obey and worship her.
Then will I give thee back thy Satyavan.
But here are only facts and steel-bound Law.
This truth I know that Satyavan is dead
And even thy sweetness cannot lure him back.
No magic Truth can bring the dead to life,
No power of earth cancel the thing once done....
Leave then thy dead, O Savitri, and live."

The Woman answered to the mighty Shade,
And as she spoke, mortality disappeared;
Her Goddess self grew visible in her eyes,
Light came a dream of heaven into her face.
"O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,
But only his own black shadow on his path..."

In the stupendous secrecy of his Self,
 Above the world brooding with equal wings,
 He is both in one beginningless, without end:
 Transcending both, he enters the Absolute....
 A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;
 It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,
 A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance.
 It compelled the suns to burn through silent Space...
 Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight...
 Transcending Time's hours, transcending Timelessness,
 The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm
 And holds the eternal Child upon her knees,
 Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.
 There is the image of our future's hope;
 There is the sun for which all darkness waits...
 There in a body made of spirit stuff,
 The hearth-stone of the everlasting Fire,
 Action translates the movements of the soul,
 Thought steps infallible and absolute
 And life is a continual worship's rite,
 A sacrifice of rapture to the One.
 A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense
 Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form...
 The Truth supreme, vast and impersonal
 Fits faultlessly the hour and circumstance...
 All there is a supreme epiphany:
 The All-Wonderful makes a marvel of each event,
 The All-Beautiful is a miracle in each shape;
 The All-Blissful smites with rapture the heart's throbs,
 A pure celestial joy is the use of sense....
 But who can show to thee Truth's glorious face?
 Our human words can only shadow her....
 O Death, if thou couldst touch the Truth supreme
 Thou wouldst grow suddenly wise and cease to be.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 654-63)

THE HINDU SABHA

AN indication of the immense changes which are coming over our country, is the sudden leaping into being of new movements and organisations which are, by their very existence, evidence of revolutions in public feeling and omens of the future. The dead bones live indeed and the long sleep of the ages is broken. The Moslem League was indicative of much, the Hindu Sabha is indicative of yet more. The Nationalist Party, while in entire disagreement with the immediate objects and spirit of the league, welcomed its birth as a sign of renovated political life in the Mahomedan community. But the Mahomedan community was always coherent, united and separately self-conscious. The strength of Islam lay in its unity and cohesion, the fruit of a long discipline in equality and brotherhood, the strength of the Hindu in flexibility, progressiveness, elasticity, a divination of necessary changes, broad ideas, growing aspirations, the fruit of a long discipline in intellectual and moral sensitiveness. The Moslem League meant that the Mahomedan was awakening to the need of change, the growth of aspiration in the world around him,—not yet to the broad ideas modern life demanded. The Hindu Sabha means that the Hindu is awakening to the need of unity and cohesion.

Does it mean more? Does it indicate a larger statesmanship, quicker impulse to action, a greater capacity for the unity and cohesion it seeks? Is the Hindu Sabha a novel body, with the power in it to effect a great object never before accomplished, the effective union of all shades of Hindu opinion from the lax Anglicised Agnostic, Hindu in nothing but birth and blood, to the intense and narrow worshipper of the institutes of Raghunandan? Or is it merely an ineffectual aspiration, like the old Congress, capable of creating a general sympathy and oneness of aim, but not of practical purpose and effective organisation? There are only two things strong enough to unite Hinduism, a new spiritual impulse based on Vedanta, the essential oneness of man, the transience and utilitarian character of institutions, the lofty ideals of brotherhood, freedom, equality, and a recognition of the great mission and mighty future of the Hindu spiritual ideas and discipline and of the Indian race,—or else a political impulse strong enough to unite Hindus together for the preservation and advancement of their community. The Hindu Sabha could not have come into being but for the great national movement which awakened the national spirit, the sense of past greatness, the divination of a mighty future, transforming the whole spirit and character of the educated community. But we fear that in its immediate inception and work it leans for its hope of success on a lower and less powerful motive—rivalry with Mahomedan pretensions and a desire to put the mass and force of an united Hinduism against the intensity of a Mahomedan self-assertion supported by official patronage and Anglo-Indian favour. Alarm and resentment at the pro-Mahomedan policy underlying the Reform Scheme and dissatisfaction with the Bombay conventionists for their suicidal support of the Government policy entered largely into the universal support given by Punjab Hindus to the new body and its great initial success. Mortification at the success of Mahomedans in securing Anglo-Indian sympathy and favour and the exclusion of Hindus from those blissful privileges figured largely in the speech of Sir Pratul

Chandra Chatterji who was hailed as the natural leader of Punjab Hinduism. These are not good omens. It is not by rivalry for Anglo-Indian favour, it is not by quarrelling for the loaves and fishes of British administration that Hinduism can rise into an united and effective force. If the Hindu Sabha takes its anchor on these petty aspirations, or if it founds any part of its strength on political emulation with the Mahomedans, it will be impossible for the Nationalist party to join in a movement which would otherwise have their full sympathy and eager support.

Lala Lajpat Rai struck a higher note, that of Hindu nationalism as a necessary preliminary to a greater Indian Nationality. We distrust this ideal. Not that we are blind to facts,—not that we do not recognise Hindu-Mahomedan rivalry as a legacy of the past enhanced and not diminished by British ascendancy, a thing that has to be faced and worked out either by mutual concession or by a struggle between nationalism and separatism. But we do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions. Hindu nationalism had a meaning in the times of Shivaji and Ramdas, when the object of national revival was to overthrow a Mahomedan domination which, once tending to Indian unity and toleration, had become oppressive and disruptive. It was possible because India was then a world to itself and the existence of two geographical units entirely Hindu, Maharashtra and Rajputana, provided it with a basis. It was necessary because the misuse of their domination by the Mahomedan element was fatal to India's future and had to be punished and corrected by the resurgence and domination of the Hindu. And because it was possible and necessary, it came into being. But under modern conditions India can only exist as a whole. A nation depends for its existence on geographical separateness and geographical compactness, on having a distinct and separate country. The existence of this geographical separateness is sure in the end to bear down all differences of race, language, religion, history. It has done so in Great Britain, in Switzerland, in Germany. It will do so in India. But geographical compactness is also necessary. In other words, the *deśa* or country must be so compact that mutual communication and the organisation of a central government becomes easy or, at least, not prohibitively difficult. The absence of such compactness is the reason why great Empires are sure in the end to fall to pieces; they cannot get the support of that immortal and indestructible national self which can alone ensure permanence. This difficulty stands in the way of British Imperial Federation and is so great that any temporary success of that specious aspiration will surely result in the speedy disruption of the Empire. In addition, there must be an uniting force strong enough to take advantage of the geographical compactness and separateness,—either a wise and skilfully organised government with a persistent tradition of beneficence, impartiality and oneness with the nation or else a living national sense insisting on its separate inviolability and self-realisation. The secret of Roman success was in the organisation of such a government; even so, it failed, for want of geographical compactness, to create a world-wide Roman nationality. The failure of the British rule to root itself lies in its inability to become one with the nation either by the effacement of our national individuality or by the renunciation of its own separate pride and self-interest. These things are therefore necessary to Indian nationality, geo-

graphical separateness, geographical compactness and a living national spirit. The first was always ours and made India a people apart from the earliest times. The second we have attained by British rule. The third has just sprung into existence.

But the country, the Swadesh, which must be the base and fundament of our nationality, is India, a country where Mahomedan and Hindu live intermingled and side by side. What geographical base can a Hindu nationality possess? Maharashtra and Rajasthan are no longer separate geographical units but merely provincial divisions of a single country. The very first requisite of a Hindu nationalism is wanting. The Mahomedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Mahomedans afterwards on the existence of great Mahomedan nations to which they feel themselves more akin, in spite of our common birth and blood, than to us. Hindus have no such resource. For good or evil, they are bound to the soil and to the soil alone. They cannot deny their Mother, neither can they mutilate her. Our ideal therefore is an Indian Nationalism, largely Hindu in its spirit and traditions, because the Hindu made the land and the people and persists, by the greatness of his past, his civilisation and his culture and his invincible virility, in holding it, but wide enough also to include the Moslem and his culture and traditions and absorb them into itself. It is possible that the Mahomedan may not recognise the inevitable future and may prefer to throw himself into the opposite scale. If so, the Hindu, with what little Mahomedan help he may get, must win Swaraj both for himself and the Mahomedan in spite of that resistance. There is a sufficient force and manhood in us to do a greater and more difficult task than that, but we lack unity, brotherhood, intensity of single action among ourselves. It is to the creation of that unity, brotherhood and intensity that the Hindu Sabha should direct its whole efforts. Otherwise we must reject it as a disruptive and not a creative agency.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol. 2, pp. 259-62)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

Occasionally I show a letter from you to some sympathetic friend. Perhaps there may be a little egoistic sense of display, so I want your order on this.

It is better not to show. Apart from the possibility of display it dissipates the force of the thing and brings in other currents from outside.

You have asked me not to mix too much with outsiders these days. Should I not mix with people from the country who will come for Darshan?

You can mix with them but not too much.

Sometimes with workmen I talk a little familiarly and they ask me things about myself, my relatives, etc. Is this sort of exchange safe or desirable?

No, it is not good. Even for the work it is better not to be familiar with the workmen.

Tonight in dream I went home and found myself talking with relatives. Is it because you have withdrawn from me?

No, certainly not. In such dreams it is usually an impression of the past in the subconscious which takes this kind of form in the dream.

14 February 1933

The other day I asked you a question about the nature of the hostile forces; at the time of writing I felt a trembling, as if something hostile were attacking, and then I felt that several soldiers were coming to arrest you, or so I imagined. I bucked up myself, called all the Ashramites and stood ready for defence. I said to the hostile force and the soldiers, "All right come, try your worst. I'll rout you all." Was this all an imagination or was it a vital attack which I felt in the mental?

Today I remembered that when the Governor of Madras came to Pondy, I had guessed that very probably he came to inquire about us in secret and to find out if there was any connection with the revolutionary movement in Bengal, and that Charles Teggart might have instigated it. Today I felt this strongly again and imagined that I killed him. Is this all imagination and mere excitement in the vital-physical which wants some aggressive exciting action?

Yes, all that is vital imagination, especially the second which was quite wrong in fact—

the Governor does not make inquiries of the kind and Teggart had nothing to do here—and the imagination of killing was altogether from some Asuric nature.

I have another peculiarity. If I sense that I am progressing, I have a feeling of shyness and shrinking and a desire not to progress much, but to be in line with others here or even be last. But I must be comparing myself with others and wrongly thinking that they are not progressing.

Each is progressing in his own way and at his own rate—one has not to be concerned with that. The shrinking from progress is tamasic, just as over-eagerness bringing in reaction is rajasic. A steady quiet will to progress without overhaste or inert relaxation is the best attitude.

14 February 1933

From observing my obscurities, I understand that obscurity is something that has escaped notice in the process of surrender or discrimination. How do you explain obscurity?

Obscurity makes these things escape notice—but obscurity is wider than that. It is the cause of all unconsciousness in the nature.

14 February 1933

If I am not very far out of the way, the first transformation is rapidly fulfilling itself. I expect the next—psychicising—to begin even during the first. I would like to know the conditions for psychicising and the process. I am reading the chapter on the intuitive mind in the “Synthesis”, but psychicising is not found there, unless it is the same as the intuitive self.

No, the intuitive self is quite different, or rather the intuitive consciousness—that is somewhere above the mind. The psychic stands behind the being—a simple and sincere devotion to the Divine, single-hearted, an immediate sense of what is right and helps towards the Truth and the Divine, an instinctive withdrawal from all that is the opposite are its most visible characteristics.

Yesterday some local boys passing by began laughing at us, but worse than that they made neighing sounds at two sadhikas going to M’s house. I thought of giving them a good lesson, but since I had not taken permission for that and it might precipitate trouble, I controlled myself. What should one do?

Remain quiet and take no notice. It is absolutely necessary to abstain from all violent

action and avoid creating any scandal. Anything of that kind would be most prejudicial to the Ashram and put it in trouble if not in peril.

I have a habit at times of speaking very strong abusive words; in College I was much feared for my directness and sarcasm, and that developed into a vulgarity in speech which has not yet gone. I want now to completely give it up.

Yes—all vital violence in speech or action is rajasic and unyogic. One must be master of oneself and controlled in speech and act.

After Mother gave me this Building Service work I am taking bath daily in the morning, whereas when I was doing office work I used to bathe on alternate days.

To bathe every day (when not ill) is most essential.

15 February 1933

Is it not selfish to be thinking so much about sadhana instead of the work given to me? I am working, but instead of concentrating on that, I am thinking more of you, your spiritual object and my sadhana.

No. Without sadhana the object of Yoga cannot be attained. Work itself must be taken as part of sadhana. But naturally when you are working, you must think of the work, which you will learn to do from the Yogic consciousness as an instrument and with the memory of the Divine.

This morning at ten or so I felt very lethargic and was compelled to sit down and almost began to doze. But you had disallowed it, so I somehow stopped it. Then I called down your help. Immediately a coolness and lightness pervaded the lumbar region and activity reappeared as if something dark had disappeared. Was this inertia thrown on the body by a hostile?

It may have been due to waking at night; but of course the natural cause is used in order to throw inertia on you and interfere with the work, that inertia has to be thrown away.

But is it proper to relate such an experience to anybody? Today I had an inclination to tell it to many people, but checked it. Why this egoism in the vital? Any small thing excites it and impels it to make a display.

It is the vital egoism natural to the ordinary human consciousness. All have it; it is to be detected by the inner consciousness and thrown out.

In the afternoon at five, I saw two or three policemen standing near Arogya House. My imagination began to work and I felt a sort of vital excitement of political fight. Was this a hostile formation of excitement thrown on me or only some unsteadiness in my vital?

Yes, naturally; it was both—a hostile formation taking advantage of the eagerness of the vital for things dramatic and exciting.

Two things escaped notice in my diet—water and lemon. Lemon I rejected, but I have to ask you whether water should be taken or not. If it is to be taken, is it necessary to take only filtered water?

Yes. The Mother has answered this on one of the blank pages at the end of your letter.

THE MOTHER: Water and sugar must be taken.

Lemon is also good.

As for salt there is enough in the cooked dishes without adding any more.

I think all this selfishness, egoism and vital excitement come up because the main aim, union with the Divine, gets forgotten or sidetracked. Or would they come up anyway?

Yes, but it is there in the human nature, and even if the union with the Divine is made the aim, it will come up and try to mix with the sadhana.

15 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

PURANI: N.N. Sircar is asking the Congress to accept the Ministry.

SRI AUROBINDO: They will say that because they are officials themselves.

NIRODBARAN: Gandhi has now agreed to a smaller body provided it is elected.

SRI AUROBINDO: Elected by whom?

NIRODBARAN: I mean not nominated by the Government.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yet, but elected by whom?

NIRODBARAN: By the people.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it comes to the same thing as Constituent Assembly. It has to be elected by the Assembly.

NIRODBARAN: But will the Muslims agree? They will be in a minority.

SRI AUROBINDO: They can have their own elected representatives. Either the Assembly has to elect the member or each party has to give its own schemes and have them thrashed out by discussion. Only one or the other of these two prospects seems possible. The idea of the Constituent Assembly is not likely to be practicable. It will be a large body and won't reach any agreement.

NIRODBARAN: But the Muslims will still put forward their Pakistan scheme which can't be accepted.

SRI AUROBINDO: There each party, as I said, will give its own scheme. If the Punjab Muslims, Sikhs, N.W.F., Baluchistan and other Muslims, *e.g.*, Arhars, Momins, stand against Pakistan then the League will have to drop it. Now they say that they are the sole representatives of the Muslims and the Government strongly supports them. The Congress is also half-hearted against Pakistan. But once it is shown that they are not the sole representatives the Government will have to accept the fact. At the same time it will be a Consultative Body discussing all the problems and putting them before the Constituent Assembly and the Government to be approved or accepted as the case may be.

NIRODBARAN: But the Congress makes a demand that the Government must accept whatever agreement they come to.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is absurd. They can't bind themselves in advance to whatever agreement. They have their own interests. You can't say that they can't have any voice in the matter. That is not practical. If you say that you declare independence and ask them to go away bag and baggage, they can't agree to it. They will do so only if they are forced to, or if they are beaten badly in the war.

PURANI: You can't say that you will accept the Pakistan scheme, for instance, and ask them to accept it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is, as Zetland said, all tall talk and phrase-making. It is not practical. The Congress is wrong in laying down such conditions. The Government is not going to submit to it. What they really intend to give is some form of Dominion Status as in Ireland, where India will be linked to Great Britain and not to go over to any foreign

power against her as she can if she is independent. The British want to keep India with them and slowly and gradually release power from their hands, expecting that in time we shall be accustomed to having connection with them. The Congress and other people are shouting old slogans in changed conditions. At one time the Independence cry was all right, but now Dominion Status is almost equivalent to that and in time you can be virtually independent. Besides, it is the best chance under the present conditions in opposition to charkha and non-violence. Hitler won't give it, neither Mussolini nor Japan. Stalin may give autonomy but controlled from Moscow. Moreover, the first thing he will do will be to cut off the industrialists and middle class and establish a peasant proletariat.

NIRODBARAN: The British have no interest in the Indian problem, as was shown by the poor attendance on the India debate.

SRI AUROBINDO: That doesn't mean they won't stick to India.

PURANI: If Hitler invades India, Gandhi will declare we are all non-violent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler will be delighted at it.

PURANI: Yes, he will sweep off everybody by machine guns. Gandhi believes he can be converted.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a beautiful idea but not credible. Does anybody really believe in his non-violence?

PURANI: I don't think so except perhaps a few of his lieutenants. Others take it as a policy. Patel does not believe.

SRI AUROBINDO: Will he face an army with his charkha?

SATYEN: Gandhi is so shrewd in so many respects, I wonder how he doesn't see this absurd side of his programme. He seems reactionary in many ways. He is against armaments because they are so ruinous.

SRI AUROBINDO: I dare say they are, but how can you avoid them?

SATYEN: He is against all machinery and the use of mechanical things, *e.g.*, fountain-pens, though he is forced to use them. It would be ludicrous to carry inkpot and pen wherever he went. Besides it would be so inconvenient as he writes whenever he gets time—and he writes with both hands.

(Concluded)

(Nirodbaran: Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 2, pp. 616-17)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

प्र बोधयोषः पृणतो मघोन्यबुध्यमानाः पणयः ससन्तु ।
रेवदुच्छ मघवुचो मघोनि रेवत् स्तोत्रे सूनृते जारयन्ती ॥

(Rigveda, 1.124.10)

O Dawn, queen of the plenitudes, awaken those who fill us (the gods), but let the Panis sleep unawakening. Richly dawn for the lords of the plenitude, O queen of the plenitude, richly for him who affirms thee, O Dawn that art Truth. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 231)

इदमु त्यत् पुरुतमं पुरस्ताज्ज्योतिस्तमसो वयुनावदस्थात्।
नूनं दिवो दुहितरो विभालीर्गतुं कृणवन्नुषसो जनाय ॥

(Rigveda, 4.51.1)

Lo, in front of us that supreme light full of the knowledge has arisen out of the darkness; daughters of heaven shining wide, the Dawns have created the path for the human being. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 231)

अस्थुरु चित्रा उषसः पुरस्तान्मिता इव स्वरवोऽध्वरेषु ।
व्यू ब्रजस्य तमसो द्वारोच्छन्तीरब्रञ्छुचयः पावकाः ॥

(Rigveda, 4.51.2)

The Dawns stand in front of us like pillars in the sacrifices; breaking out pure and purifying they have opened the doors of the pen, the darkness. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 231)

उच्छन्तीरद्य चितयन्त भोजान् राधोदेयायोषसो मघोनीः ।
अचित्रे अन्तः पणयः ससन्त्वबुध्यमानास्तमसो विमघ्ये ॥

(Rigveda, 4.51.3)

Breaking forth today the dawns awaken to knowledge the enjoyers for the giving of the rich felicity; within where there is no play of light let the Panis sleep unwaking in the heart of the darkness. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 231)

न्यक्रतून ग्रथिनो मृधवाचः पणौरश्रद्धाँ अवृधाँ अयज्ञान्।
प्रप्र तान् दस्यूरग्निर्विवाय पूर्वश्चकारापराँ अयज्यून् ॥

(Rigveda, 7.6.3)

Panis who make the knot of the crookedness, who have not the will to works, spoilers of speech, who have not faith, who increase not, who do not sacrifice, them has Agni driven

farther and farther; supreme, he has made them nethermost who will not sacrifice. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 231)

The traffickers who have not the will for the work, the binders in knots, who have the speech that destroys, who have neither faith nor growth in the being, nor sacrifice, these the Destroyers Fire has scattered before him; supreme he has made nether in their realm those who will not to do sacrifice. (*SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 301)

आदङ्गिराः प्रथमं दधिरे वय इद्भाग्नयः शम्या ये सुकृत्यया।
सर्वं पणेः समविन्दन्त भोजनमश्नन्तं गोमन्तमा पशुं नरः॥

(Rigveda, 1.83.4)

The Angirasas held the supreme manifestation (of the Truth), they who had lit the fire, by perfect accomplishment of the work; they gained the whole enjoyment of the Pani, its herds of the cows and the horses. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 232)

यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि।
आ गा आजदुशना काव्यः सचा यमस्य जातममृतं यजामहे॥

(Rigveda, 1.83.5)

Atharvan first formed the Path, thereafter Surya was born as the protector of the Law and the Blissful One, *tataḥ sūryo vratapāvena ājani*. Ushanas Kavya drove upward the Cows. With them may we win by the sacrifice the immortality that is born as a child to the Lord of the Law. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 232)

(*To be concluded*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

ESCAPADE

THREE fairies went aleaping
 Adown the glades of May;
They found a field mouse keeping
 A woodland holiday.

Quoth they, “Where is your burrow?
 Our gifts we would bestow.”
Quoth he, “In yonder furrow
 Where the yellow thistles grow.”

“Here’s one puffball for filling
 With the grey sow-thistle down,
And a gossamer gramarye shilling
 Stamped with Titania’s crown;

And we give you the wing of a cricket
 To winnow your store of grain.”
—Then they hastened away to their thicket
 And he never could find them again.

But always the wing would sever
 The dross of earth from the gold.
And always ere winter weather
 He would delve away from the cold,

And snug on the pixie pillow
 Be wafted and swayed in the air—
Or ferry across the billow
 With a shilling to pay his fare.

12 July 1935

ARJAVA

ASPIRATION IN THE PHYSICAL FOR THE DIVINE'S LOVE

HERE is the flower we have called "Aspiration in the Physical for the Divine's Love." By the "physical" I mean the physical consciousness, the most ordinary outward-going consciousness, the normal consciousness of most human beings, which sets such great store by comfort, good food, good clothes, happy relationships, etc., instead of aspiring for the higher things. Aspiration in the physical for the Divine's Love implies that the physical asks for nothing else save that it should feel how the Divine loves it. It realises that all its usual satisfactions are utterly insufficient. But there cannot be a compromise: if the physical wants the Divine's Love it must want that alone and not say, "I shall have the Divine's Love and at the same time keep my other attachments, needs and enjoyments...."

The fundamental seat of aspiration from which it radiates or manifests in one part of the being or another is the psychic centre. When I speak of aspiration in the physical I mean that the very consciousness in you which hankers after material comfort and well-being should of itself, without being compelled by the higher parts of your nature, ask exclusively for the Divine's Love. Usually you have to show it the Light by means of your higher parts; surely this has to be done persistently, otherwise the physical would never learn and it would take Nature's common round of ages before it learns by itself. Indeed the round of Nature is intended to show it all possible sorts of satisfactions and by exhausting them convince it that none of them can really satisfy it and that what it is at bottom seeking is a divine satisfaction. In Yoga we hasten this slow process of Nature and insist on the physical consciousness seeing the truth and learning to recognise and want it. But how to show it the truth? Well, just as you bring a light into a dark room. Illumine the darkness of your physical consciousness with the intuition and aspiration of your more refined parts and keep on doing so till it realises how futile and unsatisfactory is its hunger for the low ordinary things, and turns spontaneously towards the truth. When it does turn, your whole life will be changed—the experience is unmistakable.

When as a child, I used to complain to my mother about food or any such small matter she would always tell me to go and do my work or pursue my studies instead of bothering about trifles. She would ask me if I had the complacent idea that I was born for comfort. "You are born to realise the highest Ideal," she would say and send me packing. She was quite right, though of course her notion of the highest Ideal was rather poor by our standards. We are all born for the highest Ideal: therefore, whenever in our Ashram some petty request for more comfort and material happiness is refused, it is for your own good and to make you fulfil what you are here for. The refusal is actually a favour inasmuch as you are thereby considered worthy to stand before the highest Ideal and be shaped according to it.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 130-31)

A NEW BIRTH

IN fact, so long as there is any doubt or hesitation, so long as one asks oneself the question of whether one has or hasn't realised this eternal soul in oneself, it proves that the true contact has not taken place. For, when the phenomenon occurs, it brings with it an inexpressible something, so new and so definitive, that doubt and questioning are no longer possible. It is truly, in the absolute sense of the phrase, a new birth.

You become a new person, and whatever may be the path of the difficulties of the path afterwards, that feeling never leaves you.... You are a new person and definitively that, whatever happens. And even all the incapacity of the mind, all the difficulties of the vital, all the inertia of the physical are unable to change this new state—a new state which makes a decisive break in the life of the consciousness. The being one was before and the being one is after, are no longer the same. The position one has in the universe and in relation to it, in life and in relation to it, in understanding and in relation to it, is no longer the same: it is a true reversal which can never be undone again.... When it is that, it is that, and then it is finished, it is no longer anything else.

And since we are speaking of that, I shall remind you of what Sri Aurobindo has said, repeated, written, affirmed and said over and over again, that his yoga, the integral yoga, can begin only after that experience, not before....

To console you I may tell you that by the very fact that you live on earth at this time—whether you are conscious of it or not, even whether you want it or not—you are absorbing with the air you breathe this new supramental substance which is now spreading in the earth atmosphere. And it is preparing things in you which will manifest very suddenly, as soon as you have taken the decisive step....

When this happens to you, almost all the questions you ask yourself or ask me will be solved.

And anyway, your attitude to life will be so different that you will understand what is meant when one speaks of living spiritually. And at that moment you will also understand a great thing, a very great thing: how to live without ego.

Until then, you cannot understand it. The whole of life is so dependent on the ego that it seems absolutely impossible to live and act except with or by the ego, but after this new birth you can look at the ego with a smile and say to it, "My friend, I don't need you any more."

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 336-38)

EIGHTEEN YOGAS OF THE GITA

THERE are eighteen chapters in the Gita. These constitute its eighteen Yogas. At the end of each chapter the corresponding title is specified. Whether these were given by Vyasa himself or the later compiler of the Mahabharata cannot be said, but these do describe well the yogic contents of the corresponding chapter. The titles are as follows:

- 1 Arjuna Vishad Yoga: The Yoga of the Dejection of Arjuna
- 2 Sankhya Yoga: The Yoga of Sankhya Knowledge
- 3 Karma Yoga: The Yoga of Action
- 4 Jnana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge
- 5 Karma-Sannyasa Yoga: The Yoga of Renunciation of Action
- 6 Dhyana Yoga: The Yoga of Meditation
- 7 Jnana-Vijnana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge and Realisation
- 8 Akshara-Brahma Yoga: The Yoga of the Imperishable Brahma
- 9 Rajavidya-Rajaguhyā Yoga: The Yoga of Sovereign Science and Sovereign Secret
- 10 Vibhuti Yoga: The Yoga of Divine Manifestations
- 11 Viswaroop-Darshana Yoga: The Yoga of the Vision of the Cosmic Form
- 12 Bhakti Yoga: The Yoga of Devotion
- 13 Kshetra-Kshetrajna-Vibhaga Yoga: The Yoga of Discrimination of the Field and the Knower of the Field
- 14 Gunatraya-Vibhaga Yoga: The Yoga of the Division of the Three Qualities
- 15 Purushottama Yoga: The Yoga of the Supreme Being
- 16 Daivasur-Sampada-Vibhaga Yoga: The Yoga of the Division between the Divine and the Demoniācal
- 17 Shraddhatraya-Vibhag Yoga: The Yoga of the Threefold Faith
- 18 Moksha-Sannyasa Yoga: The Yoga of Liberation by Renunciation

ANONYMOUS

AN EARLY LETTER

WHEN leaving, I turned round to say “Good-bye”—but what came out of my mouth was: “You have a face of a rare beauty, and the word to be underlined is ‘rare’. All beautiful faces don’t have what yours has.” I said this not because I wanted to pay a compliment but because at the sight of your face there was a flash in my mind and I could see through my eyes rather than with my eyes and something beyond physical sight saw, what I can only call an elusive dream behind that delicate structure of harmonious lines that is your face. There are two kinds of beauty—beauty that stops with itself and beauty that opens a door. The first kind has a polished perfection of the surface and its disclosure is the attractive arrangement of astonishing possibilities of things finite. Beauty of the second kind is translucent: it lets a strange light through and we are drawn out of ourselves to pursue a mystery

Whose touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends...

Such beauty is indeed rare. And we may say of it that it keeps ever growing. Each night the Unknown feeds it with new secrets, and each day reveals through it a dazzling delight to which poets strive life-long to give a name. No poet really succeeds—but it is the poets alone who are able to catch with their eyes the silent call of this beauty and hold in their hearts the inexhaustible wonder of it like a flower that is a flame and like a flame that is a kiss. The non-poet looks and is puzzled—the rarity of the loveliness cannot fail to be noticed even by him but he cannot recognise it for what it is and he thinks his imagination is playing tricks with him. Ultimately he comes to believe that this loveliness is only an unusual variety of the surface perfection he meets time and again. The poet is never deceived, for his inner being is always aware of divine distances and, when once in a lifetime he is touched by an enchanting warmth from them, his whole self yearns, with every passionate quiver of which it is capable, to the face that has brought him this warmth. But his passion is not of mere flesh. Answering to the rare beauty he has clasped, it is like the excitement and ecstasy of his own art, which serves finally to compose the eternal poise and peace of the faultlessly rounded poem.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

The room is separated from the corridor by sliding-doors that will allow the air to circulate freely when open.

Layout:

Our plan is most simple. We have oriented the building in a way that aligns all the rooms and which gives them the same south, south-east opening in order to shut off the western sun. We have placed the staircases in the centre so as to directly connect with the entrance. The toilets and bathrooms, etc. are also conveniently located.

Thanks to the angle given to the building the gardens are attractively laid out and being enclosed on all sides they become tranquil cloisters where one can walk or spend time agreeably.

Construction:

Notice the extreme simplicity which gives the building a certain style and elegance without losing the economical advantage.

The floors are concrete slabs that rest on brick pillars. The cantilevered part of the slabs forms the corridor and the awnings are as large as possible in order to give the maximum shade.

Floors in ceramic tiles for freshness.

Ceilings: Celotex against resonance and an excellent insulator for sound and heat.

The shutters are an important element.

We manufacture these here. Made with a thin board of wood 25 cms wide and painted, they slide on metal strips and are regulated with a cord from inside. They can be tilted at different angles or completely closed.

The windows are sliding. Wood-frame. We have learnt to make them quite water-proof.

The doors are in plywood and insulated against sound and heat.

Furnishing:

The walls in the rooms are sectioned to form built-in wall-cupboards and bookshelves. The bed is moveable.

The tables and chairs are also moveable except for the desk that is fixed.

As for the bed we suggest a wooden board on legs of steel and a spring mattress. Such a mattress is not only comfortable but can be easily moved for airing.

Materials:

Since there are no customs-duties for Pondicherry it would be advantageous to buy a lot of the materials here. A list of the approximate prices will follow for you to compare with the Pondicherry prices.

Everything could be fabricated here; doors, windows, furniture would then only have to be installed.

Kindly study these plans carefully. If you find them of any interest to you please let

us know your suggestions. We would then need to study the details of the construction. If you are interested in the construction we will then make full-size drawings for details, etc. We could even send you one of our architects to assist your engineer with the construction of the building.

Yours,
Antonin

The price-list follows. To save on time we are first sending you the plans.

(Translated from the original French by Maurice Shukla. The original letter is reproduced as facsimile on pages 480-82.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S REMARKABLE VISION*

The following was originally published by Wesley Bradshaw in the *National Review*, Vol. 4, No. 12, December 1880 (and handed down to me by my grandmother).

THE last time I ever saw Anthony Sherman was on July 4, 1859, in Independence Square. He was then 99 years old, and becoming very feeble. But though so old, his dimming eyes rekindled as he gazed upon Independence Hall, which he came to visit once more.

“Let us go into the hall,” he said. I want to tell you an incident of Washington’s life—one which no one alive knows of except myself; and, if you live, you will before long, see it verified.

From the opening of the Revolution we experienced all phases of fortune, now good and now ill; one time victorious and another conquered. The darkest period we had, I think, was when Washington, after several reverses, retreated to Valley Forge, where he resolved to spend the winter of 1777. Ah! I have often seen our dear commander’s careworn cheeks, as he would be conversing with a confidential officer about the condition of his poor soldiers. You have doubtless heard the story of Washington’s going to the thicket to pray. Well, it was not only true, but he used often to pray in secret for aid and comfort from God, the interposition of whose Divine Providence brought us safely through the darkest days of tribulation.

One day, I remember well, the chilly winds whistled through the leafless trees, though the sky was cloudless and the sun shone brightly, he remained in his quarters nearly all the afternoon alone. When he came out, I noticed that his face was a shade paler than usual, and there seemed to be something on his mind of more than ordinary importance. Returning just after dusk, he despatched an orderly to the quarters of the officer I mention who was presently in attendance. After a preliminary conversation of about half an hour, Washington, gazing upon his companion with that strange look of dignity which he alone could command said to the latter:

“ ‘I do not know whether it is owing to anxiety of my mind, or what, but this afternoon, as I was sitting at this table engaged in preparing a dispatch, something seemed to disturb me. Looking up, I beheld standing opposite me a singularly beautiful female. So astonished was I, for I had given strict orders not to be disturbed, that it was some moments before I found language to inquire the cause of her presence. A second, a third, and even a fourth time did I repeat my question, but received no answer from my mysterious visitor except a slight raising of her eyes.’

“Presently I heard a voice saying, ‘Son of the Republic, look and learn,’ while at the same time my visitor extended her arm eastwardly. I now beheld a heavy white vapor at some distance rising fold upon fold. This gradually dissipated, and I looked upon a strange

* About Sri Aurobindo’s comment on the three dreams of Washington, reference may be made to the January 2002 issue of *Mother India*, p. 7.

scene. Before me lay spread out in one vast plain all the countries of the world—Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. I saw rolling and tossing, between Europe and America, the billows of the Atlantic, and between Asia and America lay the Pacific.’

“‘Son of the Republic,’ said the same mysterious voice as before, ‘look and learn’. At that moment I beheld a dark, shadowy being, like an angel, standing, or rather floating, in the hollow air, between Europe and America. Dipping water out of the ocean in the hollow of each hand, he sprinkled some upon America with his right hand while with his left hand he cast some on Europe. Immediately a cloud raised from these countries and joined in mid-ocean. For a while it remained stationary, and then moved slowly westward, until it enveloped America in its murky folds. Sharp flashes of lightning gleamed through it at intervals, and I heard the smothered groans and cries of the American people.

“A second time the angel dipped water from the ocean, and sprinkled it out as before. The dark cloud was then drawn back to the ocean, in whose heaving billows it sank from view. A third time I heard the mysterious voice saying, ‘Son of the Republic, look and learn.’ I cast my eyes upon America and beheld villages and towns and cities springing up one after another until the whole land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, was dotted with them. Again I heard the mysterious voice say, ‘Son of the Republic, the end of the century cometh, look and learn.’

“At this the dark shadowy angel turned his face southward, and from Africa I saw an ill-omened spectre approach our land. It flitted slowly over every town and city of the latter. The inhabitants presently set themselves in battle array against each other. As I continued looking, I saw a bright angel, on whose brow rested a crown of light, on which was traced the word ‘Union,’ bearing the American flag which he placed between the divided nation, and said, ‘Remember ye are brethren.’ Instantly, the inhabitants casting from them their weapons became friends once more, and united around the National Standard.

“And again I heard the mysterious voice saying, ‘Son of the Republic, look and learn.’ At this, the dark, shadowy angel placed a trumpet to his mouth and blew three distinct blasts; and taking water from the ocean, he sprinkled it upon Europe, Asia, and Africa. Then my eyes beheld a fearful scene. From each of these countries arose thick, black clouds that were soon joined into one. And throughout this mass, there gleamed a dark red light by which I saw hordes of armed men, who, moving with the cloud, marched by land and sailed by sea to America, which country was enveloped in the volume of cloud. And I dimly saw these vast armies devastate the whole country, and burn the villages, towns and cities that I beheld springing up.

“As my ears listened to the thundering of the cannon, clashing of swords, and the shouts and cries of millions in mortal combat, I again heard the mysterious voice saying, ‘Son of the Republic, look and learn.’ When the voice had ceased, the dark shadowy angel placed his trumpet once more to his mouth, and blew a long and fearful blast.

“Instantly a light as of a thousand suns shone down from above me, and pierced and broke into fragments the dark cloud which enveloped America. At the same moment the

angel upon whose head still shone the word 'Union,' and who bore our national flag in one hand and a sword in the other, descended from the heavens attended by legions of white spirits. These immediately joined the inhabitants of America, who I perceived were well-nigh overcome, but who immediately taking courage again closed up their broken ranks and renewed the battle. Again, amid the fearful noise of the conflict, I heard the mysterious voice saying, 'Son of the Republic, look and learn.'

"As the voice ceased, the shadowy angel for the last time dipped water from the ocean and sprinkled it upon America. Instantly the dark cloud rolled back, together with the armies it had brought, leaving the inhabitants of the land victorious.

"Then once more I beheld the villages, towns and cities, springing up where I had seen them before, while the bright angel, planting the azure standard he had brought in the midst of them, cried with a loud voice: 'While the stars remain, and the heavens send down dew upon the earth, so long shall the Union last.' And taking from his brow the crown on which was blazoned the word 'Union,' he placed it upon the Standard, while the people, kneeling down, said 'Amen.'

"The scene instantly began to fade and dissolve, and I at last saw nothing but the rising, curling vapor I at first beheld. This also disappearing, I found myself once more gazing upon the mysterious visitor, who in the same voice I had heard before, said, 'Son of the Republic, what you have seen is thus interpreted. Three great perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful is the third.'

"(The comment on his word 'third' is: The help against the Third peril comes in the shape of Divine assistance, passing which, the whole world united shall not prevail against her. Let every child of the Republic learn to live for his God, his land and Union.)

"With these words the vision vanished, and I started from my seat and felt that I had seen a vision wherein had been shown me the birth, progress, and destiny of the United States.

" 'Such, my friends,' concluded the venerable narrator, 'were the words I heard from Washington's own lips, and America will do well to profit by them.' "

(From the Home Page of Luke Stevens, 25 March 2001)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

8

SRI AUROBINDO introduced the “cosmic drowse of ignorant Force” and its “sommambulist whirl” into the opening of *Savitri* in the manuscript in which he first changed “spirit of Night” to “mind of Night” a few lines above.¹ The significance of this mind of Night has been the topic of the last few instalments. The conjunction of “sommambulist” and “Force” brings us back to the sentence in Book Three discussed earlier in connection with an entry in the *Record of Yoga*. The last line of that sentence, “Across his path sits the dim camp of Night”,² led us to study the composition of the opening passage, where Night is described from 1936 onwards in a sentence that starts with almost the same words: “Across the path...”

The 1937 manuscript of the opening continues the description of Night with a sentence containing the expressions quoted above:

Awhile she seemed, so deep a darkness lay,
A mute unconscious semblance of the Unknown,
Abysm of the unbodied Infinite
Whose fathomless zero occupies the world,
Cradling the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
That carries all things in its sommambulist whirl.

The last two lines are connected with the first two lines of the related sentence in “The Vision and the Boon”. This sentence, it may be recalled, was drafted in the late 1920s, when it was part of Book One, still entitled “Quest”:

An inert Soul and a sommambulist Force
Have made a world estranged from life and thought...³

This is followed by the symbols of the Dragon, Sphinx and Night, to which several articles in this series have been devoted.⁴ In the present section of this exposition we have set out to look at these symbols or occult realities in relation to the first page of *Savitri* as it gradually took shape up to the middle of the 1940s.

Sri Aurobindo seems to have been interested in the phenomenon of sommambulism from a psychological point of view even before he began to refer to it in his philosophical writings for the analogy it offers to the intelligence observed in the works of apparently unconscious Matter. In his unfinished story *The Door at Abelard*, written around 1910-

12, the notion of somnambulism figures prominently. At one point in the story, a character (a doctor) has the thought: “Somnambulists were often alert and keen-minded even beyond their waking selves”.⁵ When the hypothesis of somnambulism appears inadequate to account for a certain event, the doctor qualifies this assessment with the idea that after all, “Somnambulism did not make one omniscient....”⁶

In later writings, Sri Aurobindo used the image of a somnambulist to illustrate how “material Nature does the works of a supreme and miraculous intelligence”.⁷ He did not hesitate to extend this intelligence to include even a hidden omniscience behind the “somnambulist” movements of the very atom. At the same time, as we have seen,⁸ the “utter apparent separation of Force from Consciousness” symbolised by the sleep-walker has produced “the poise of being in the material universe which is the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself”.

This “specious miracle of the all-governing and infallible Inconscient”,⁹ however admirable its works may be in their own way, has not created perfectly happy conditions for the beings struggling to emerge from it; “for as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be”:

Where the Consciousness is like that of material Nature, submerged, self-oblivious, driving along in the drift of its own Force without seeming to know it, even though by the very nature of the eternal relation between the two terms it really determines the drift which drives it, so will be the Force: it will be a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient, unaware of what it contains, seeming mechanically to fulfil itself by a sort of inexorable accident...¹⁰

The monstrosity of this inertia and unconsciousness would not have been noticeable, however, until the relatively recent appearance of beings conscious enough to be aware of it as a violence to their need for freedom and self-fulfilment. From one angle, what Death says to Savitri is true; the problem is not with the unconsciousness of the world, but with the intrusion into it of an ineffective half-consciousness that has disrupted the old automatic harmony without substituting a new and higher one:

When all unconscious was, then all was well.
I, Death, was king and kept my regal state,
Designing my unwilled, unerring plan,
Creating with a calm insentient heart.

It would seem that the somnambulist world could have continued indefinitely in this way without any problem. But this was not to be. Death describes what happened:

Then Thought came in and spoiled the harmonious world:...
A trouble rocked the great world’s blind still heart
And Nature lost her wide immortal calm.

The consequences are what we now see around us:

Thus came this warped incomprehensible scene
 Of souls emmeshed in life's delight and pain
 And Matter's sleep and Mind's mortality,
 Of beings in Nature's prison waiting death
 And consciousness left in seeking ignorance
 And evolution's slow arrested plan.¹¹

Death's claim that evolution is "arrested", having reached the human level and yielded such unsatisfying results, is based on an impression created by the slowness of the process, relative to the span of a human life. It is just this claim that Savitri proceeds to refute. She describes in another way how the material basis of this universe was laid:

The Mighty Mother her creation wrought,
 A huge caprice self-bound by iron laws,
 And shut God into an enigmatic world:
 She lulled the Omniscient into nescient sleep,
 Omnipotence on Inertia's back she drove,
 Trod perfectly with divine unconscious steps
 The enormous circle of her wonder-works.¹²

This account of the inspired somnambulism of Nature implies the possibility of an outcome not admitted by Death in his presentation of the same facts about how things began. In his version it was he, Death, who was king and there was no God shut into the world. That this is an "enigmatic world" is acknowledged by Savitri, but not that it is a "senseless paradox".¹³ All indications point to the conclusion that the gradual emergence of the omniscient and omnipotent divinity concealed (or "involved") in this creation is the ultimate purpose that justifies its long and tortuous history.

Sri Aurobindo used the word "somnambulist" in *Savitri* in order to hint at such an involution and a possible or inevitable consequent evolution. A sentence in a letter he wrote in 1935 makes this clear:

The Inconscient itself is only an involved state of consciousness which like the Tao or Shunya, though in a different way, contains all things suppressed within it so that under a pressure from above or within all can evolve out of it—"an inert Soul with a somnambulist Force."¹⁴

This letter is of particular interest, as it is a rare instance of Sri Aurobindo's quoting his own poetry in a philosophical rather than a literary context. Moreover, this was perhaps only the second time that he divulged lines from *Savitri* to others—the first time had been when he quoted to Amal Kiran the lines:

Piercing the limitless unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo---was asked where the phrase “an inert Soul with a somnambulist Force” was taken from. He replied, “From ‘Savitri’ ”, and wrote out this line and the next in the form in which they are found in all his manuscripts:

An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
Have made a world estranged from life and thought.

These lines occur in a passage that purports to show how “all is in dire league” against the human spirit. In many places in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has given voice to man’s sense of the precarious insignificance of his life in the immensity of an inanimate, unthinking world. For example, this image is found in Book Two, Canto Five:

A thin life-curve crosses the titan whirl
Of the orbit of a soulless universe,
And in the belly of the sparse rolling mass
A mind looks out from a small casual globe
And wonders what itself and all things are.¹⁶

But this is a deliberately incomplete picture, a vivid presentation of how things look “in the half-light below”, before revealing the vision that “meets us on the heights”.¹⁷ The very fact that life and thought have appeared at all in a world of their opposites alters the significance of this world and suggests that what was suppressed must emerge, that this “inert Soul guiding with a strange and blind sureness the steps of a somnambulist Nature”¹⁸ will sooner or later cast off its inertia and wake the somnambulist to a consciousness of her forgotten identity. Even now the world can be viewed with different eyes, as Aswapati comes to see it:

The universe was not now this senseless whirl
Borne round inert on an immense machine;
It cast away its grandiose lifeless front,
A mechanism no more or work of Chance,
But a living movement of the body of God.¹⁹

After the 1937 version of the opening passage quoted earlier, in revising the sentence about the “ignorant Force” and its “somnambulist whirl”, Sri Aurobindo inserted a new line:

Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns....

This line was first written in the margin of a manuscript which slightly precedes the 1942 version of “The Book of Beginnings” (corresponding to the present Part One). The line stresses, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out, “the paradoxical nature of the creation and the contrasts which it contains, the drowsed somnambulist as the mother of the light of the suns and the activities of life.”²⁰

During the early 1940s, the sequence of the lines in this passage was in a state of flux. In a manuscript belonging to 1943 or the beginning of 1944, we find that a line on the “dark beginning of all things” has been added and Sri Aurobindo has copied the sentence as follows:

Almost one felt, timeless, impenetrable
 The abyss of the unbodied Infinite
 Whose fathomless zero occupied the world;
 As in the dark beginning of all things
 A mute unconscious semblance of the Unknown
 Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
 Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
 And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

We have seen that somnambulism as a figure for the nature of material existence is an ambiguous concept. It indicates on the one hand the absence of consciousness on the surface, on the other the presence beneath the surface of a suppressed consciousness with incalculable potentialities. It points to the separation of consciousness from force as the cause of the colossal inertia that opposes all change, yet it holds the key to the possibility of an unimaginable transformation:

This nescience of Matter is a veiled, an involved or a somnambulist consciousness which contains all the latent powers of the Spirit. In every particle, atom, molecule, cell of Matter there lives hidden and works unknown all the omniscience of the Eternal and all the omnipotence of the Infinite.

The evolution of forms and powers by which Matter will become more and more conscious until passing beyond form and life and mind it becomes aware with the supernal awareness of the eternal and infinite Spirit in his own highest ranges, this is the meaning of earth existence. The slow self-manifesting birth of God in Matter is the purpose of the terrestrial Lila.²¹

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. This manuscript consists of a loose sheet of paper on which Sri Aurobindo copied the revised first page of the typescript of the 1936 version (see the facsimile in *Mother India*, November 2001, p. 859), making changes as he copied. The typescript was sent to him by Amal Kiran on 20 January 1937. It is likely that Sri Aurobindo revised the typed copy of the opening not long after he received it. His handwritten fair copy on the loose sheet, which continues on the back of the first page of the typescript itself, was probably made and revised around the same time.

2. *Savitri* (1993), p. 336.

3. *Ibid.* These two lines are the same in all manuscripts.

4. The Dragon and Sphinx were discussed in the instalments of June and July 2001. The symbolism of Night has been the subject of all the articles since then.

5. *Collected Plays and Stories*, CWSA, Vol. 4, p. 977.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 978. The Mother gave a precise analysis explaining the abnormal capacities of somnambulists and the dangers of this involuntary state. According to her, somnambulism occurs when the physical consciousness is asleep, "but the inner being is awake, and the body is so tied to it that it follows it automatically". That is to say, "the part which does not sleep, which is active, uses the body without the physical consciousness as intermediary and makes it do things directly.... That is why you do fantastic things, because you do not see them physically, you see them in a different way." (*Questions and Answers 1950-51*, CWM, Vol. 4, p. 127)

7. *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 255.

8. See *Mother India*, October 2001, p. 765.

9. *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 211.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

11. *Savitri*, pp. 617-18.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 624-25.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 693.

14. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 235.

15. See *Letters on "Savitri"* (2000), "Editor's Note to the 1951 Edition". Amal inquired in September 1931 about the source of these lines which he said Sri Aurobindo had "once quoted" to him and which "produce such a wonderful impression of a slow, majestic widening out into infinity."

16. *Savitri*, p. 167.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

18. *Essays Divine and Human*, p. 240.

19. *Savitri*, p. 42.

20. *Letters on "Savitri"*, p. 27.

21. *Essays Divine and Human*, p. 247.

THE SUN OF THE TRUTH-IDEA

THERE is no physical being in the Sun
but there is infinite Matter,
There is no vital being in the Sun
but there is the ceaseless Life,
There is no mental being in the Sun
but there is the Wisdom-mind,
There is no psychic being in the Sun
but there is the great Spirit.
Lo! He is Aditya Purusha, he is the first-born,
the Visionary Being,
He is the supramental Godhead of the vast golden Light,
of the Day.
This the Sun luminous in the thousand-petalled lotus
of the crown,
This the Sun of crimson glow spreading his seat
in inner skies of the heart,
This the Sun drinking bright ambrosia
in the navel where is lodged Death.
This the Sun that has kindled countless seeds
of creation in the organ,
This the Sun in his intense heat
burning in the worlds below the feet.
Therefore indeed is this earth nourished
by his splendid radiances,
And the Waters, and the Breath, and the triple Flame
grow ever in him,
And the limitless ether, without hue,
containing all forms creates forms.
It is by his fire that this Night exists,
even as the stars in it shine,
It is in the hush of Space that the Word arrives
on soundless tracks,
This the Sun of superconscient Force
gleaming with the Truth-Idea;
Therefore assuredly the wise pass
through the wide gates of the Sun,
And the bright of souls, and the strong of limbs,
ever dwell in him.
No wonder in the Sun they established
foundation of the All-Bliss.

And the Seasons came and the Quarters awoke
 and Speech burst forth,
 And the Eternal took birth to grow
 in the mystery of endless Time.
 This the Sun the Devourer, and the Fosterer,
 and the tireless Increaser,
 Eater of the Food, he is the one who is the Eating,
 and he the Food.

R.Y. DESHPANDE

ALL ROADS LEAD HOME

If I walk down to the ocean fierce and wild
 Or climb the hills above the distant town,
 Whether I'm the eagle soaring with outstretched wings
 Or the gasping whale run aground on the sand,
 All roads lead to the One to which we go.

In the sick house or the saint's house,
 Laughing heartily in the bar or kneeling at the altar,
 On the chain gang, or in my lover's arms,
 There is something beyond words that never fails.
 Can you see It through this haze?

In the child's eyes or the madman's cries,
 In the heat of battle, in the wastelands of war,
 There is a quiet place, if you can find It,
 Where a peace beyond all words is restored.
 When you've walked these roads, you know they're all headed home.

ALLAN STOCKER

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

Calamitous History's Propulsion

“WHEN the magnanimous Hector wishes absolutely to fight the magnanimous Achilles, and with this object starts fleeing with all his might, and three times makes the circuit of the city before fighting, in order to have more vigour; when Homer compares fleet-of-foot Achilles, who pursues him, to a man who sleeps; when Madame Dacier goes into ecstasies of admiration over the art and mighty sense of this passage, then Jupiter wants to save great Hector who has made so many sacrifices to him, and he consults the fates; he weighs the destinies of Hector and Achilles in the balance (Iliad, liv. xxii.): he finds that the Trojan must absolutely be killed by the Greek; he cannot oppose it; and from this moment, Apollo, Hector's guardian genius, is forced to abandon him. It is not that Homer is not often prodigal, and particularly in this place, of quite contrary ideas, following the privilege of antiquity; but he is the first in whom one finds the notion of destiny. This notion, therefore, was very much in vogue in his time.” This is what Voltaire writes about the historic event that took place several centuries ago.

It was the Moira of Hector to be killed in the Trojan War and nothing could have prevented that happening. Even the gods were helpless in the shove of fate. But over the long centuries we have moved away from preordained designs and it is possible for us now to mould our destiny by participating in a larger enterprise. The tools of science have changed the entire course of history and there doesn't seem to be any reason for us to put ourselves in the hands of uncertain or shady operators of the world. Dubious promptings of the agents of life and the pitfalls of stepping into the valley of the wandering gleam have vanished with the security that enlightened reason can present to us. Rational thought has brought to us another dimension and we should not disdain the gifts that have come with it. But it is also necessary that we grow in the truer sense of its wisdom.

Even William Blake,—who lived in the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (1757-1827) and who valued minute particulars in poetry,—had a word of praise for science as a tool of understanding. His epic poem *The Four Zoas* concludes with the line: “The dark Religions are departed and sweet Science reigns.” He saw a power in science that pushed out the bigotry of creed and dogma. Constantine had made religion an instrument of political conquest and Christianity thrived in that glory,—only to bring later disrepute to it. Man's spirit of freedom was disregarded and ignominy followed dire ignominy. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake wrote: “Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion” and “As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.” This was the rightful contempt shown by him for organized religion. It is in that sense that the age of empirical rationalism introduced by Newton gave a positive sense of direction to life in the material domain. Blake was a social critic and at the same time had the pro-

phetic insight to recommend values that lend dignity to man's life. He achieved remarkable results and restored "rich musicality to the language." In a deep mystical tone he tells us:

I am in God's presence night and day,
And he never turns his face away.

Blake was witness to three epoch-ushering Revolutions,—the Industrial, the American and the French Revolution. This was the time when another hand of some invisible power was shaping the destiny of nations. The western world was undergoing a sea change and the spirit of time was demanding that man excel in the capability and capacity of liberal and progressive reason. The feudal agricultural society was suddenly turning into an industrial society. The rights of the individual proclaimed by it had Blake's approval. But, while the gains were astounding, there were also portentous consequences that followed in the unhappy sequel. The Industrial Revolution in England can be taken as the starting point that propelled the engines of material prosperity as well as human obloquy that has reached another height in our times. Let us briefly run through the events.

When in the early eighteenth century thick oak forests in Britain were getting denuded, she had to depend entirely upon the large deposits of coal. Power-driven machinery and the technological innovations that gave rise to industrial production completely altered the pattern of society. Innovative changes since 1700 greatly aroused popular interest in industrialization. Western Europe followed the example and in next to no time caught up with the trend. The unemployed population suddenly found occupation. Rich tobacco and tea merchants came forward with capital investments. Cheap raw materials from the colonies and assured markets in those unorganized countries drove the European industry and commerce on swift roads. Scientific revolution of the seventeenth century had already sowed firm seeds for such an unprecedented growth. The discovery of electromagnetism around 1830 and the production of electricity coupled with the cheap availability of steel after 1850 further speeded the whole process.

More or less parallel to these developments changes in Britain were also taking place in the agricultural field. Introduction of the seed drill and the horse hoe started giving higher yields from the farms. Systematic stock breeding of sheep and cattle added substantially to the farming affluence. In the area of scientific cultivation the enthusiasm of Arthur Young was so great that some land at Buckingham Palace was used for farming. "Even George III ploughed and asked his friends to call him 'Farmer George'."

The invention of the flying shuttle by John Kay in 1733 completely transformed the face of textile production. Hargreaves's patent for the spinning jenny and Crompton's machine, known as "Crompton's mule", began to produce quantities of fine and strong yarn. With further mechanization between 1780 and 1860 power looms arrived on the scene. These developments led to the dramatic reduction in the cost of making cloths. During this period the availability of natural dyes for the textile industry had also to be assured. A number of wild plants in India were a traditional source of indigo which soon

became a precious commodity for export to England. But the return traffic brought finished textile goods at an exorbitant cost. Colonial mechanics of exploitation became fully operational.

Steam power proved to be a landmark in the industrial development of Europe. In 1705 Thomas Newcomen built the state-of-the-art engine. This was followed in 1763 by James Watt's reciprocating engine. By 1807 such an engine could drive an experimental steam vessel up the Hudson.

But it was not until 1873, a little more than fifty years after Faraday had discovered the law of electromagnetic induction, that an electric dynamo could be put into practical use. Yet in Italy, where coal was not available, hydroelectric power soon started becoming common in villages north of Rome. In 1890 Florence had the distinction of driving the first electric streetcar. Today electricity is the sine qua non for the survival of our civilization. From the discovery of fire by the ancient man to the arrival of the microwave oven mankind has taken an enormous leap in its progress. The enterprise has brought the reward of heavenly bounty to us in which we can rather gainfully grow—unless we do that stupid thing of stoking the nuclear fire. The Greek Titan Prometheus (which means Forethought) considered ways to make humans superior. Wise Athena had taught him mathematics, navigation, astronomy, architecture, medicine and many other arts. Prometheus had created humans in the likeness of gods, using the clay and water of Panopeus, and Athena had breathed a living soul into them. He passed onto man the useful arts and looked with joy upon his creation. No wonder Aeschylus says “every art possessed by man comes from Prometheus.” But then we also begin to wonder if the gifts of the heroic immortal were given to man too early.

During the Industrial Revolution development was greatly advanced by the appearance of a successful railroad system. The first railway to arrive on the scene, in 1830, was between Manchester and Liverpool. On this line George Stephenson's ‘Rocket’ pulled a train of cars at fourteen miles an hour. Prompted by the British success, and with her know-how and capital, France, Germany, Russia, Canada, and the United States built complex rail networks for merchandise as well as passenger traffic.

The automobile industry today is a typical American phenomenon but its links can be traced to the internal combustion engine developed in Europe before 1900. Not too long after that, in the sequel of the First World War started appearing commercial aviation. These two together made the search for fossil fuel an imperative. We have now a formidable petrochemical industry with all its mega-commercial, financial, social and political implications. The world has changed completely with that, entailing both gains and imbalances of several kinds. Surely from the penny post letters inaugurated in Britain in 1840, we have moved a great distance to e-mail service.

“The Industrial Revolution brought with it an increase in population and urbanization, as well as new social classes. The increase in population was nothing short of dramatic... The general population increase was aided by a greater supply of food made available by the Agricultural Revolution, and by the growth of medical science and public health measures which decreased the death rate and added to the population base...

Between 1800 and 1950 most large European cities exhibited spectacular growth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were scarcely two dozen cities in Europe with a population of 100,000, but by 1900 there were more than 150 cities of this size." Industrialization, the necessity for marketing finished goods, appearance of political centres such as London, Paris and Berlin, and the new phenomenon of banking and marketing functions promptly led to this urbanization. But this had also another side. "Rapid growth of the cities was not an unmixed blessing. The factory towns of England tended to become rookeries of jerrybuilt tenements, while the mining towns became long monotonous rows of company-built cottages, furnishing minimal shelter and little more. The bad living conditions in the towns ... were also due to the factory owners' tendency to regard labourers as commodities and not as a group of human beings. In addition to a new factory-owning bourgeoisie, the Industrial Revolution created a new working class. The new class of industrial workers included all the men, women, and children labouring in the textile mills, pottery works, and mines. Often skilled artisans found themselves degraded to routine process laborers as machines began to mass-produce the products formerly made by hand. Generally speaking, wages were low, hours were long, and working conditions unpleasant and dangerous. The industrial workers had helped to pass the Reform Bill of 1832, but they had not been enfranchised by it." (An Internet write-up by Gerhard Rempel) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1995, writes about the great event in human history as follows: "The Industrial Revolution, in modern history, [is] the process of change from an agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture. This process began in England in the 18th century and from there spread to other parts of the world..." The increasing application of science to industry gave rise to a new class of employee with distinctive skills. The worker "instead of being a craftsman working with hand tools, became a machine operator, subject to factory discipline. Finally, there was a psychological change: man's confidence in his ability to use resources and to master nature was heightened." But there are alarming implications also, implications of a frightful nature if the dubious course of the so-called developments is going to be irreversible.

Arnold Toynbee in his lectures published posthumously in 1884 talks about the impact of Industrial Revolution in great detail. "It has been a weakness of the science, as pursued in England," says he, "that it has been too much dissociated from History." In the harsh world of commerce man is simply treated as "a money-making animal" and the social aspect, customs, feelings, tradition, the aspect of human aspiration, are all relegated to the lumberyard of the past. "It was thus that Mr. Gladstone in the Land Act controversy of 1881 was constantly accused of violating the laws of Political Economy." Large population shifts have given rise to new stresses with accompanying ailments. Gone were the small manufacturers who also held pasture-farms with their handicraft. Gone were the village fairs and the droves of packhorses and the travelling merchants. Small dispersed market towns grew into large commercial cities. "Sometimes the London merchants would come to the manufacturers, paying their guineas down at once, and taking away the purchases themselves." But all that just disappeared. Now we have elabo-

rate banking and business organizations to take care of such transactions. The living conditions of the factory workers in those days were deplorable, far worse than that of the agricultural wage earners. "The contrast between the industrial England of 1760 and the industrial England of 1884 is not only one of external conditions. Side by side... there has taken place a change no less radical in men's economic principles, and in the attitude of the State to individual enterprise. England in 1760 was still to a great extent under the medieval system of minute and manifold industrial regulations. That system was indeed decaying, but it had not yet been superseded by the modern principle of industrial freedom. To understand the origin of the medieval system we must go back to a time when the State was still conceived of as a religious institution with ends that embraced the whole of human life. In an age when it was deemed the duty of the State to watch over the individual citizen in all his relations, and provide not only for his protection from force and fraud, but for his eternal welfare, it was but natural that it should attempt to insure a legal rate of interest, fair wages, honest wares. Things of vital importance to man's life were not to be left to chance or self-interest to settle. For no philosophy had as yet identified God and Nature: no optimistic theory of the world had reconciled public and private interest. And at the same time, the smallness of the world and the community, and the comparative simplicity of the social system made the attempt to regulate the industrial relations of men less absurd than it would appear to us in the present day."

While keeping pace with these advancements, legislation also became quite perceptive to the demands of a new agricultural-industrial pattern. The freedom of internal trade was an important factor in the English prosperity, as was pointed out by Adam Smith. But still the mobility of labour and capital was strictly restricted. "By the law of apprenticeship no person could follow any trade till he had served his seven years." So also coming together of labourers as an organized class was forbidden by law. In the context of international trade laws were passed which supported national defence; in them national opulence was the primary objective. This meant that shopkeepers primarily dictated the terms in every respect. The publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was in a certain sense inevitable in the sequence. In it the doctrine of *laissez-faire* had an undisputed validity. Personal initiative to create wealth irrespective of any other human consideration became the accepted norm. To promote individualism is a welcome feature no doubt, but it is also to be tempered with the thoughtfulness of a collective life.

"The essence of the Industrial Revolution is the substitution of competition for the medieval regulations which had previously controlled the production and distribution of wealth. On this account it is not only one of the most important facts of English history, but Europe owes to it the growth of two great systems of thought—Economic Science, and its antithesis, Socialism. The development of Economic Science in England has four chief landmarks, each connected with the name of one of the four great English economists. The first is the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, in which he investigated the causes of wealth and aimed at the substitution of industrial freedom for a system of restriction. The production of wealth, not the welfare of man, was what Adam Smith had primarily before his mind's eye; in his own words, 'the great object of the

Political Economy of every country is to increase the riches and power of that country.' ... A second stage in the growth of the science is marked by Malthus's *Essay on Population*, published in 1798, which may be considered the product of that revolution, then already in full swing... Malthus directed his inquiries, not to the causes of wealth but to the causes of poverty, and found them in his theory of population. A third stage is marked by Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, which appeared in 1817, and in which Ricardo sought to ascertain the laws of the distribution of wealth... The fourth stage is marked by John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1848. Mill himself asserted that 'the chief merit of his treatise' was the distinction drawn between the laws of production and those of distribution... A great advance was made by Mill's attempt to show what was and what was not inevitable under a system of free competition."

There is no doubt that in the commercial world competition is operationally meaningful, making it always effective. It drives the engines of human effort and human ingenuity to possibilities that can become more affirmative, even leading them into the creative domain. It is as though a constant external pressure is necessary to establish a balance of forces that can take society to higher levels of working. This may happen with our enlightened participation in it or unconsciously under the supervising intent of superior nature. Even the Darwinian struggle for existence in the biological world has a limitation, in the sense that it can acquire the character of a struggle only for a particular kind of existence. Competition in the commercial enterprise has, on the other hand, built into it the feature of human innovative and inventive prospects. Add to that the dynamism of unfoldment of the higher spirit and we begin to get the fruits of a more desirable and wholesome harmonious mode of life. But today's competitive society has no notion about it nor has any inclination towards it. The result is the appearance of severe human problems, mostly springing up from the unregenerate tendencies of the vital man. Regulation in a State-controlled organization kills an individual's initiative; but then a corporate set-up also tends to become sophisticated, mechanistic, deterministically rigid except for the top executives. We know not the Vaishya principle that can make all existence "a poem of sacred delight".

The question Arnold Toynbee the economist-philosopher posed more than a hundred years ago remains unanswered even today. He asked: "Will Free Trade continue to be beneficial? will our wealth continue to increase and our trade to expand?" This is very pertinent even in the present age. The industrial trap into which we have fallen is sufficiently indicative of the fact that we get more and more ensnared in an unredeemable manner. In the commercial-industrial world there is no room for pursuits other than monetary gains. Idealism is dismissed and sensitivities to finer moods of life are moonshine in it. Not only that. Its action and its methodology stifle the refined soul of humanity, as if the iron grip of a dark force made it its instrument for the destruction of values. It is unfortunate that a helpless prospective employee sells his life to glorify himself in a circle of uncompromising corporate slavery. He has lost the meaning of existence and he knows not whereto his riches will take him. With the advent of Big Science the industrial

trap has become nightmarish, rebuffing even the solid gains that have accrued in the process. “We know too much, are convinced of too little. Our literature is a substitute for religion, and so is our religion.” This is what T. S. Eliot says. We have too much wealth but we know not its value. Robotics is the Bible of Modern Man. We do not know what William Blake would have said about it. He was “Europe’s greatest mystic poet” who “transcribed what he saw and heard.” (*The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol. 9, p. 529) He would see a chapel all of gold or hear an angel sing to him. Not only that; he wanted to pick up his bow and arrow to fight against the prowess of the twofold evil. The plight of the chimney boys of London and the false heavens of the religion were a cause of concern for him and he would not remain quiet.

Blake accepted science but was critical of the Industrial Revolution. In his poem *London* he describes the woes of an urbanized society living a dehumanized life.

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper’s cry
Every blackening church appalls,
And the hapless soldier’s sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot’s curse
Blasts the new-born infant’s tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

F. W. Bateson writes about it as follows: “The London into which William Blake was born on November 28th 1757 was the object some thirty-five years later of two of his most biting and memorable lines:

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow...

In the poem’s first draft the opprobrious epithet had not been ‘chartered’ but ‘dirty’ (‘dirty street’, ‘dirty Thames’), but by the time *London* was engraved for *Songs of Experience*

the mere physical pollution had come to seem less oppressive to Blake than the spiritual tyranny exercised by the City of London, its boroughs and its incorporated companies. The Magna Carta had once been a guarantee of English freedom, but by the eighteenth century the charters, from which not even the Thames was exempt, were empowering a minority of Londoners to impose their 'mind-forged manacles' on the rest of their fellow-citizens." (Introduction to *Selected Poems of William Blake*, 1957)

The woes of the commercial-industrial civilization that we experience today had their brown-shelled seeds in the grimy soil of the past. AIDS and Ebola have hopped up from our hunger for wealth. We have lost contact with Mother Nature. But the next drama, however, will unfold not in moneymaking relations, but in the soul of humanity urging to move in the completeness of a multifold order. Travelling one road in economics and a different one in aesthetic and spiritual values makes for neither a smooth ride nor a settled destination. How that schizophrenia shall be resolved will determine the inspiring and progressive ideal of the world we set for ourselves. Issues far greater than even the gains of Space-travel and the Internet ought to govern our concerns.

Our biggest problem is not the unholy nexus of science and commerce, nor is it the antagonism between reason and faith; it is we. Until our attitude towards life changes, until our systems methodology undergoes a radical transformation, unless we discard the money-prism through which we see our prospects, hopes of meaningfully enjoying even our fondest occupations of the day will remain unfulfilled. It is unfortunate that the one-sided British legacy springing up from the Industrial Revolution is being perpetrated on a much larger scale, with the danger of it becoming global. This needs to be halted. We have to retain or acquire its assets, even while purifying them in the Yajna of the Age, we should see that all the facets of the society find their true and harmonious occupations being carried out in the expectation of the higher spirit which is waiting for that to happen. We have to liberate ourselves from the deterministic or fatalistic mode hectoring our thoughts and actions and feelings and live in the freedom of the luminous will.

(To be continued)

R.Y. DESHPANDE

SPRINGS

HAVE you had the thrill of loving your wife, son and mother
A friend, a father, a stranger, a child and an elder?
Loving for just the sake of love, with no motive and no plan
To just dissolve in the pleasures you give thereby and not scan?

Have you known the presence of sheer goodness and its value
As of the flower that pours its fragrance and the myriad hue
As of the sun that showers its shine and warmth, not expecting its due
As of the gentle who do their good deeds in shyness, stealth and no hue?

Have you sensed the great reserve, shunning limelight
Of character and conduct, cherished as if they are one's birthright
Of noble disposition, grace in work and of music in the very living
Steadfastness, grandeur and of virtue—not meant for mere book-keeping?

Have you been caught by the spell of adventure, never saying enough
Ever climbing from peak to peak and never calling off strife
Of Science, searching from below atom to the beyond of the stars
Of Spirit, seeking from Self to the limits of the Absolute's dimensions?

Have you felt the grace of God even for an iota of a moment
A Bliss sublime, a Presence supreme, a Purity with no taint
Sweet, final, all consuming and a benediction, offering you in full
A golden glimpse of the Truth, the Good and the beautiful?

If you have ever had the fortunes of these, even as a rarity
Foster them deep and well. For, these are the springs of humanity.

K. H. KRISHNAMURTHY

A STUDY OF SRI AUROBINDO'S LAST POEMS **BY M. V. SEETARAMAN**

THE poetry of Sri Aurobindo voices in inevitable words and rhythms his profound vision of Man, Nature and God. Poetry, as defined by him, is the *Mantra* of the *Real*. The most essential characteristic of the Mantra is the 'inevitable word' which springs from the deepest recesses of man's soul, the Word originating from the very home of Truth. As a poet, Sri Aurobindo seized on some truth of being, some breath of life, some power of the spirit and invariably brought it out with a certain supreme force for his and our delight and joy in its beauty. Though he as a writer of long poems like *Savitri*, *Ilion*, *Love and Death* and *Urvasie*, could sustain poetic inspiration over long stretches, he was equally at home in his short lyrics, in which he deployed his favourite device of reinforcing his vision of life in unflinching rhythm, vibrant with revelatory power. The redeployment and reaffirmation of his main themes form a fitting last movement to his mature work embodied in his sonnets of the final phase. In this volume [*A Study of Sri Aurobindo's Last Poems* by M. V. Seetaraman] eight of Sri Aurobindo's Hymns have been collected along with the author's meditations on all of them.

I

About the author of these meditations, M. V. Seetaraman, it must be pointed out right at the outset that he has lived out the Master's Spiritual Wisdom as embodied in his writings. The first thing that will strike even the most casual reader is the unmistakable luminosity of his penetrating insights and perceptive grasp by his consistently receptive and effortlessly responsive consciousness. I had the rare privilege of being his student at Annamalai University during 1954-57. I used to attend all his extra lectures meant for B.A./B.Sc. and Intermediate classes on Poetry, Shakespeare and Prose, for these used to be held on holidays when I was delightfully liberated from the timetable-bound routine. What amazed me was the thrill with which students thronged to the lecture hall, abandoning the week-end trip to the theatre! With what a beating heart did I watch the atmosphere of stillness in which the students of the class were listening spell-bound to Prof. Seetaraman's masterly expositions on (to name a few) Shakespeare's *Othello*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Sir Richard Livingstone's *Some Tasks for Education*. What was happening in the classroom is difficult to explain. All the faculties of the participating students were being fully exercised. After the lectures, there used to be heated and lively discussions on subjects as serious as the Socratic Wisdom through dialogue, the gradual degradation in Satan's character in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the contrast between the witchcraft of love and that of wit in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Outside the classroom I was always drawn to the Professor's Garden in No. 5, New Pandits' Quarters, where I used to taste the fruits of his spiritual sadhana. Often I went there in the evening to return only at midnight and sometimes in the morning after listening with rapt attention to informal expositions on various facets of spiritual life. Many a

time I chose to skip my dinner so that grand opportunities for spiritual progress were not allowed to slip away. Even during the vacations, tempted by the daily prospect of meeting ‘Sir’ (as we affectionately used to call him) and profiting by the delectable wisdom of his insights, I kept away from home by staying on the university campus.

All splendid things come to a close; so did my happy life in the university. But my contact with ‘Sir’ continued even after I became a lecturer, a Government of India scholar and a lecturer again. ‘Sir’ chose to retire from his academic life, but the rare privilege of exposure to him has continued till today. In fact, I continued to attend his lectures till 1965. His insights into life, literature and various dimensions of spiritual life have helped each one of my faculties—mind, will, heart, senses, the inner self—blossom and flower petal by petal. My literary taste has been formed and refined by my constant exposure to his writings, talks and even casual conversations.

It was in September 1959 that he started composing the articles included in *A Study of Sri Aurobindo’s Last Poems*, which were intended for publication in *The Advent*. I was a witness to the various stages of production of the first two articles. It used to be composed straight on the typewriter and with great expectancy I used to await its finished composition. Reading it in its various phases gave me the experience of an unearthly joy. During that period I felt all, loved all, wondered all, and my literary and spiritual tastes were securely nourished and fostered. I continued to show consistent interest in the articles till they ceased coming. My wide exposures to scholarship of all varieties—indigenous and from abroad—which included scholarship thriving on facts (facts methodised) or on memory (ignorance methodised) or on accuracy (accuracy methodised) but delightfully free from insights—enabled me to realise even better by contrast the value of Sir’s basic insights and discriminations in his handling of any subject. I hunger for lectures like the ones I listened to at Annamalai and for more and more of his wisdom-packed, logically knit, emotionally charged and spiritually profound articles, touching upon spiritual poetry and sadhana.

II

“The Hymns of Sri Aurobindo,” as the author rightly declares in his Preface, “are the classic and mature expressions of the major realisations in the practice of Integral Yoga.” All the articles collected here are structured upon a common pattern: the first part giving a wide spectrum of perspective for the entire poem followed by a close explication of the several units of the poem. Here I must record that nowhere else in the world’s literary criticism—Indian, British, American, European, Oriental or Occidental—have I come across any critic giving a sustained insightful interpretation of any poem word by word, line by line. The poems as well as their meditations are so grand that they resist any crude attempt at paraphrasing or explaining. Still some hints about the contents need to be indicated in the author’s own words to avoid distortion.

The first article, dealing with *Surrender*, is a meditation on Sri Aurobindo’s hymn of complete consecration aspiring for an integral union and integral transformation. The

nearness of the sadhaka to the Lord and Master of Yoga has revealed to him “the secret nature of the Lord who is at once the secret Spirit and Nature.” All the parts of his being including the mind give their assent to the integral union and devout supplication. “As we advance in the poem from line to line the aspiration for union and identity increases in intensity and the deepest secrets of the Mighty Lover and His Will in this world, the logic in the magic of his manifestation stand self-revealed and the future is already visualised with extraordinary vividness. For the Transcendent has willed to transform this mind, life and body with His Supramental Shakti and establish a divine life in a divine body. Love was born only for this grand purpose and consummation!”

The Divine Worker is “the song of victory of the Siddha who is a doer of...Divine Work.” The Divine Worker faces “earth’s happenings with an equal soul” and “a spiritual poise of absolute certainty in the divine victory.” He has invoked the Transcendent to prevail in the world and in himself and so he finds the Lord hastening by his secret guidance the evolution in and through Destiny.” “And so the Divine Work presents the spectacle of a rude combat with fate.” “The Divine Worker feels the Divine Mother’s smile of absolute certitude, victory, composure and benignant Grace within his heart and this is his armour and weapon in the mighty cataclysmic fight with the python coils of the Inconscient.” “The Lord is felt in him as the possessor of his being and above him as the ruler of all its workings and they become to him nothing but a manifestation of Him in the existence of the Jiva.” “All the movements of all the faculties in him, his acts, are the impulses of Divine Will and every series or group of such acts directed to an end to be achieved in the world outside or inside is again for and of the Divine Lila.”

Lila embodies “the Supramental vision of life” which “sees the universal manifestation as a sport whose aim is the affirmation of Sachchidananda in its apparent opposite.” “The very nature of the Divine is a mystery—to be one and yet thousandfold, to be simultaneously the Seer, the Thinker and the Poet—and his creation naturally partakes of this mysterious quality.” “The Divine having created and being in the very process of creation, becomes also the Purusha behind the creation. He is the Sakshi, Anumanta and Bhokta of all. He is the Rasika of the universe enjoying the Rasa and Ananda by Bhoga.” “He in whose Heavenly Palace of the Realm of Ananda, Chaitanya and Satya Parama, the overmental Gods and Goddesses and their delegate angels of the Intermediate Zone (stars) are treated by Him to a feast of Light, Beauty, Love, Power and Bliss, has condescended to be here in the triple world of Nature as a Guest.” “Also He is the indwelling Cosmic Soul, the Virat Purusha, of the whole Universal Nature with its totality of creatures which are changing every infinitesimal unit of time and whose similarity of successive patterns gives the illusion of fixity to the human mind, but which are really released and withdrawn by the Cosmic Shakti in the opening and closing of Her eyes, *unmesa nimisotpanna-vipanna-bhuvanavaleha*.” “A divine life in the manifestation is the inevitable outcome and consummation of Nature’s evolutionary endeavour. This is the supramental vision of life and the world—to see them as the fields for the progressive manifestation of higher and higher levels of the Divine Consciousness till the very physical consciousness radiates the Ananda of Lilamaya Krishna.”

Krishna describes the “profoundest experience of the Transcendent Grace of the Divine Lover descending in answer to the human aspiration and therefore fulfilling the age-long quest and making the creation or manifestation meaningful and significant.” “The sadhaka of integral yoga is a true child of the Earth inheriting this ardent longing and pushing forward in this grand quest and the adventure towards the Infinite Person, Krishna.” “In fact the very hunger of the earth and man for His feet is the response to His magnetic Personality secretly immanent and drawing all, *akarshayan*, towards Him by an entrancing music.” “It is His saviour passion which has done the miracle of converting the mortal heart accustomed to the rhythms of earthly pleasure and pain, into a fit instrument for receiving and retaining the divine Ananda.” “Descending into the heart and establishing His empire in it, He touches every other part and shapes it for His advent in it. So the vital, the vital physical, the physical and the whole of Nature through these and in these hear the music of the Lover now quite near them, and quite audible to them.” “The secret of the mystery of cosmic evolution and the birth of the soul in this world is Krishna’s Love and Ananda. World and Man exist in Him and for Him. Krishna is the meaning and significance of all existence and manifestation.”

Shiva hymns Sri Aurobindo’s “vision of the mystic marriage of the Superconscient and the Inconscient.” “The poet has entered into the consciousness of the World-Artist and Architect, which holds all the details of His work viewed as a whole, intended or reviewed in His mind or arranged in a plan for execution. And so, he begins with the vision of Transcendent Lord and Master of all existence, the Superconscient Shiva engaged in ‘His mystic loneliness of nude ecstasy’,” “guarded from all unreceptive instruments and personalities and worlds.” “None can molest it for the fire guards it.” “This nude ecstasy is the Bliss of contemplation of one’s own essential nature of Sachchidananda, *swaswarupanusandanam*, which reveals in an endless progression, deeper and deeper and wider and wider levels and kinds of Bliss in different organisations of consciousness. Each kind of Ananda so seen and brooded upon is executed by the Chit-tapas in the form of a creation of that particular world. So are created the graded worlds of the sevenfold existence and each world has its own reflection of the original Ananda in the principles of *vyahritis* of the supermind, overmind, intuition, illumined mind, higher mind, mind, vital and physical, the three higher retaining unity even in the duality and multiplicity of world experience and the three latter having lost it.” “Shiva’s loving glance inspires love and harmony and a sense of rhythm in the heart-beats of the Mighty Mother and She likes to express her feeling of Ananda, though now only in the lowest plane of Matter, in physical circular orbits of motion and so we have the perfect rhythmic dancing motion of the worlds inspired by physical passion.”

The Word of the Silence records “the experience of the Purna Yogi who listens in a tranquilly intense, wide ecstasy to this Supreme Word with his purified and transformed human mind in complete wakeful awareness.” “After a long and apparently even interminable subjection to the noise of the different planes of consciousness below the Realm of Supramental Silence, the mind (of the yogi) has attained a state of august, expectant and suddenly arrested stillness, hush.” The “intellect of man is ‘conditioned completely by it.

It leaves out of account the Infinite and Eternal which controls Time and shapes the objects towards a goal which remains a secret to the time-bound consciousness'. "The mind of the Purna Yogi has been so far psychicised and spiritualised and lifted nearer and nearer the rhythm of the Supramental that it has *now* become plastic to receive the Vibration of the Supermind, the word." "So the word is made flesh and the flesh partakes of the glory of the Word." "Within and without, all turns to a tumult of joy of many-sided richness and intensity of ecstasy springing from an ocean heart of wideness, freedom and peace, by the presence and power of The Word of the Silence, Anahata Nada."

The Self's Infinity embodies "the realisation of the Self as Sachchidananda in the Supramental plane, the most integral poise of the soul in man enveloping the two poles of existence—the Superconscious in the realms of Knowledge above and the unconscious in the realms of Ignorance below." "The Yogi who has received the touch of the Supermind becomes aware of That behind all things, and all things emerge and return, pass into That. It is felt as a Void, an Infinite Zero which is the beginning and end of the whole manifestation." "The monstrous grip and iron hold or heavy clutch of the hands of time which made life a tangled web with tortuous knots give place to the grasp by timeless hands." The heart becomes "the focal point of the unlimited consciousness of the Infinite Purusha who has no sympathy or antipathy but an all-embracing divine compassion and love for all." "Now the body is seen to be in the large and all pervasive consciousness of the soul, its vast expanse, as an almost insignificant point in the infinite dimension of the soul." "The consciousness slumbering in this nether pole of existence responds to the Supramental and so the huge abyss wakes after aeons of torpor." "His consciousness reaches out and pervades, stretches in all Space-Time dimensions from the Overmental zenith down to the Unconscious nadir and embraces the eternal in all these planes, an eternal everywhere."

Sri Aurobindo's hymn *All-Beauty* embodies "the experience of the Rose of Beauty," "the sister of the Rose of Love, and both are the forms of the Rose of Bliss." "The Omnipresent Reality, the Supreme Divine Mother draws all towards Her by these three powers of Her being, *Ananda, Lavanya* and *Prema*." "Every moment brings with it new intensities" of the divine rapture and the being "thrills in a dynamic and uplifting identification with the Beloved." All "eyes are windows to the Divine Mother for seeing and revealing Her essential secret form of Beauty and Bliss immanent in all." "This spiritual communion with the Divine, feeling Her mystic touch, meeting Her secret gaze, hearing Her magic tune and experiencing Her haunting sweetness in all nature in a rapturous snare are the prelude to a deeper contact with the very body of the Divine Ananda Brahman in animate and inanimate creation and this extended to all space and all time." "The movement of Time is not an endlessly repeating vain round or cycle in Ignorance to be rejected at the earliest opportunity by the enlightened soul which must indeed seek its own personal salvation by an escape into the Timeless Beyond, but a purposive sojourn a voyage with the Divine Mother seated on its projecting front part."

III

“The Divine Poet has composed his magnificent poem with its varied and intricate craftsmanship” and, to use the author’s own words, “He now becomes its Rasika, the appreciating critic and explicates it with his characteristic tools and methods.” Much has the author travelled in the realms of literature, English and Sanskrit, and more than that one senses behind the articles a heart throbbing with passion and compassion for kindred souls caught in the turmoils of life, eager to share with them fruits of his spiritual sadhana. The author is endowed with the gift and felicity of phrasing of the highest kind. Here are some examples:

Vasudeva is the soul and form of all these becomings in the world and to meet Him in every form and contact and worship Him in every soul and as the All-soul are the lofty consummation of love and the supreme ecstasy for the God-lover and God-knower.

Victory is a manifestation of the Power of God producing immediately the intended result in circumstances which are ripe and have been made ripe by the Divine—His passage mirrored in Fortune’s glass.

...each formation of Nature is a kind of inn for the Psychic, the Divine Spark and He goes from inn to inn of this natural construction. And indeed, He partakes freely of all the hospitality of the members in the inn, digests and assimilates the essence of the experiences in and with them and leaves the inn and its members only when they have left it and it is dissolved as well.

The Divine is a great alchemist infusing the elixir of His magical Essence into all the elements from the Ether down even to the rock and transmuting them into the gold of His divinity.

The look of Shiva, the wooing Lover, is all Grace and elegance with all the delicacy, subtlety and cajoling magic of courtship. It has nothing to do with the soul-shattering, all-destroying furious stare associated with Him. It is a soul-stirring, all-entrancing ‘glance’.

The caverns of the mind are full of shadows of experience, cerebralised abstract notions of the conceptual faculty, void and empty of any trace of the fire, flesh and blood of actual life, a disordered assemblage of layers upon layers of clumsy ideas, and theoretical speculations which are at several removes from experience.

All individual movements and the totality of such finite cyclic motions—the world—are realised as waves in the vast ocean of the Infinite Consciousness. The world which appears as a gigantic structure to the limited mental consciousness is now seen to be engulfed by the Waters of the Infinite and Timeless Superconscience.

The psychic being is not now the mere, simple spark of the divine in the human, harmonising and integrating the mortal members around its divine centre but a burning brazier of aspiration, adoration, love and surrender and complete conse-

creation, a full-blown Supramental Purusha. The child has become most completely child-like divesting itself of all its past childishness, nestling in the arms of the Divine and feeling the plenitude of the joy of the nourishing Beauty and Ananda of the Divine.

What the author says about each poem included here is true of every meditation included in the collection. "The utility of this short meditation to the sadhaka is immense." The regular Parayana, Adhyayana and Anusandhana of these meditations over the last 31 years have bestowed upon me Peace, flowering of all my faculties and insights and discriminations regarding all things, spiritual and material, and I, therefore, recommend the Book to every earnest reader and seeker. Here is a Book of Meditations, which is meant for sadhaks—"Fit audience, though few," something most precious which posterity will not "willingly let die."

S. KANDASWAMI

A MOUSE'S LAMENT

Slow and steady wins the race—
Is how the saying goes.
So I've decided to slow down my pace
And run slow on the tips of my toes.

I'm walking now—this sure feels gross
And good Lord, just fancy that,
It's gaining on me...now it's quite close...
Awk! I'm stuck in the mouth of a cat!

I think I was wrong on the tips of my toes,
Or maybe that saying's all lies;
But what I do know is that I suppose
The saying is not meant for mice!

GAYATRI LOBO GAJWALA
(Age 12 yrs)

A FEW DREAMS

A DREAM OF 4 MAY 1984 (NIGHT)

IN dream state—a wide sea, I am going to enter into the sea. I tell nearby people, “Get aside and give me the way. Sri Aurobindo himself will make me learn how to swim.” Just then I felt a hand on my back and I recognised that it was Sri Aurobindo’s hand. I started swimming in the sea. That big large hand continued to support me for a long time. Later I felt that the hand was withdrawn and I was able to swim myself. Then I found that I was entering deep into the sea. I got worried if I would be getting drowned. I felt that I had no difficulty breathing, though I was in the deep sea. Strange it was. Just then I again felt the same big large hand which I immediately recognised to be Sri Aurobindo’s.

Just then I heard Sudha’s voice enquiring if today I was not going for an outing. I awoke. In the waking state I felt that great waves were surging out from the psychic centre. They were entering into different parts of my mind, vital and body and many new and remote corners. Thereafter my aspiration grew more intense and I felt as if the psychic is gradually holding in its possession the whole field of mind, life and body. It seemed that within a few years the whole individuality will be psychised. Only then the real yoga of Sri Aurobindo will start.

*

A DREAM OF 31ST JANUARY & 1ST FEBRUARY 1981 (NIGHT)

I see that 3-4 children are singing some very charming devotional songs. I feel a very deep joy which appears to be surging from the psychic centre. Suddenly I see that a flame comes out from my psychic centre. This flame goes on spreading and surrounding me and consuming me. I am astonished to see what is happening to me and I find that I am fully consumed in this psychic fire.

(To be continued)

BHUSHAN DHINGRA

IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS

To reach out of my bedroom window and catch a falling star,
To soar high over mountain peaks away from the tangled complications of mind
and matter,
To raise a solid temple of faith on the flowing waters of love,
To stand firm on an island of truth even when the countless waves of malice and
falsehood are ruthlessly lashing away,
To discover a land unsoiled by selfishness and jealousy and to bask in the naked
bliss of its purity,
To walk into a world of peace and happiness where men can live in harmony with
each other, like the millions of stars in the milky way,
To emerge victorious in life's battle where all the three, the enemy, the conqueror,
the conquest are all really within,
O, at last to build my own castle in the air and some day go and live in it—
These are the stuff that my dreams are made of—crazy, wild, impossible!?
But how can a dream be worthwhile if it doesn't aim at Utopia?
And how can I face the dawn of another tomorrow unless I have before me the
challenge of an impossible dream?

AUROPOSÉE BARDHAN

CAN IT BE?

I MIND me how her smile was sweet
And how her look was gay.
O, she was laughter, joy complete!
And can she now be clay?

I see the roses on her grave
They make my sad heart bleed.
I see the daisies shine like stars.
And is she earth indeed?

All lovely things with beauty are,
And just deeds shine as just.
And faith and truth and duty are.
And is she only dust?

The great sky keeps its solemn blue:
Fresh earth is wildly fair.
Can all things be, and I and you,—
She nothing, she nowhere?

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(From *Songs of Love and Death*, 1926)

A LETTER

Milan, 3.8.2000

Maggi dearest

With the first tumour last year, the Divine revealed to me that aspect of Himself which governs the evolution of matter and the body on the one hand, and on the other gave me the material support of specific therapies (I refer both to traditional chemotherapy and Dobrea's new medical methods).

This year, with a second unexpected tumour, the Divine has instead left me 'defenceless' on the medical front.

In fact, the oncologist who has attended me since the beginning no longer understands anything, no longer knows what therapy to use and considers me, from his point of view, incurable. As to Dobrea, this time he has offered neither diagnosis nor definitive treatment. It is as though the Divine wants to do everything...His way, and means to confound the medics thoroughly.

The Divine has now left me completely alone before Him, *with no support other than Himself*, no other material reality than His, to offer the occasion and possibility of a complete self-giving on the purely physical plane.

This new Grace is *infinitely* greater than that which cured me so incredibly (for others, not for me) a year ago. Self-giving has to be renewed at every new attack of the pain, every sharp turn of the illness, my only medical support is the Divine in pure spirit.

Meanwhile I have had to have recourse to a centre for pain treatment, which with increasing doses of morphine, unfortunately, has managed to restore me to a more or less decent life. I have often asked myself if it wasn't cowardice, but the pain had become unbearable...

The Divine has stopped using the mental and emotional part of the being in order to carry on the work exclusively on the physical. All experiences have been moved into matter and the body, and the most intense and real ones have occurred precisely during the most acute attacks of pain, when I thought I could no longer stand it.

In a 'particular' moment of the greatest pain, I identified with the most ignorant and obscure part of the sick body, which 'candidly' asked me and itself what was... the Light! In all this, the Felicity of Existence has taken up its seat in me and never left me. The Mother is in residence in the ailing body, Her face that of the Warrior who has been given another battlefield to rout falsehood in the body's most obscure darkness. This darkness and the Mother's work in it are at the core of this last experience.

The pain has lessened a little in the last few days, I manage to move on crutches and I am taking the opportunity to write to you.

Ginevra and Isabella (who has become a wonderful daughter) have decided to take me for a while to the mountains, in Val d'Aosta, and I am moved by the thought that I will smell the perfume of pines and wild flowers again.

Maggi dearest, to you, Nata, Surakshita, all my deepest and strongest love.
In the Divine forever.

ARKA

A Note from Maggi

Arka left his body very few weeks after writing this and going to the mountains.

He had opened a publishing house to publish several of Sri Aurobindo's major works in Italian, "Arka Publications". He had also started one of the first Sri Aurobindo Centres in Italy (Milan).

Auroville is planning a community for "senior Aurovilians" to be named after him. Some of those pioneers to Auroville are now in their 70s, some nearing 80. The foundation stone was laid on the first of January.

Arka was the name given him by Nolinida. Before that his name was Umberto Costanzia.

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XIV

KALYANDA (A Sparkling Vintage Wine)

Whatever a man's age, he can reduce it several years by putting a bright coloured flower in his button hole.

MARK TWAIN

*For when the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name,
He marks—not that you won or lost—but how you played the game.*

GRANTLAND RICE

KALYAN CHAUDHURY or simply Kalyanda was a man in a class by himself. Born into an aristocratic family—father a well known *shikari* (hunter) of those early years of the last century, another of his kinsmen an ex-Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian army, Gen. J.N. Chaudhury, and another a well known writer, Pramatha Chaudhury. Kalyanda seemed to have inherited some of these traits in good measure. Top these up with a flair for sports and spinning yarns—and what you have is a matchless man with a charm all his own, loved by all and a man who loved all. The elephant skull in our science laboratory and the tiger and leopard skins in Sri Aurobindo's room were all from Kalyanda's or his father's hunting trophy collection.

Kalyanda was born on the 28th of March of 1909. He was in his youth a bright student and later was sent to Europe to study engineering. I think he could already build tall stories—all in good fun, no serious implications.

Not much did I know about him, prior to his life here in the Ashram. He came here way back in 1938 and was at once captured by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He did have a heavy tilt (like the leaning tower of Pisa, for which he did have a remedy long, long decades ago. But there were no takers) towards this life (for which he had no remedy). He had two or three experiences, before he arrived here, when in England and elsewhere in India. I came to know of them only recently, and will speak of them anon.

I shall now go forward in time to 1945 and onwards, when I actually set my eyes on him, the “ordinary” Kalyanda. The first impressions were also the last (so to say). Kalyanda was an athletic-looking man—good height, wiry welldefined muscles, yet smooth and supple. His movements had a felineness. A kindly smile ever played on his lips. The nose—oh! the nose—was ever so lightly turned up and pointed, with a slight bump below the bridge. He dressed himself up smartly, always in white shorts, a white T-shirt or shirt with collar turned up to lend to the smartness. He changed to white trousers for cricket—a legacy of the Empire. There never was a hint of dandyism, only smartness. I spoke of ‘first and last impressions being the same’, for he was ever young physically and mentally (he often wore a rose in his button-hole), and his heart too was always ebullient, warm and generous. But (always there is a ‘but’), his ire could easily be roused, but as

easily doused. On occasion I happened to raise it to its full flaring. Later (even to this day) it is only I who seem to remember the happening. He, the victim, seemed, not only to have forgiven me, but also forgotten the episode the very next day! We could sum up Kalyanda as a ‘cavalier’—colourful with a bit of dash, ever ready to fight but as ready to succour.

Kalyanda was a good sportsman. He played good enough tennis and cricket. He was a stylist and played his strokes (tennis, cricket and verbal) correctly and gracefully.

Kalyanda was an ‘Ashram renowned’ spin bowler—leg spin—if my cricket vocabulary is correct, and a correct and elegant batsman. He considered the game to be a gentleman’s game (this was before the era of match-fixing) and frowned upon any departure from the accepted norms and decorum of dress and behaviour—be it in player or spectator. As both, I rubbed him the wrong way, on occasions. Once as a spectator, I with the help of Alain (a French boy, an ex-student), was rooting, rather vociferously, for no one in particular. Kalyanda was more than a bit annoyed, and exclaimed ‘*Joto din e duto borbor ache, ami khelbona*’ (as long as these two barbarians are there, I will not play). He soon forgot all about it. Again, when I, as a player, hit 3-4 consecutive balls of his famous leg-spin to the boundary, he said with some disgust and / or exasperation ‘*E to spinner mormo bojhena*’ (He does not even understand the value / intricacy of spin). Again once I was keeping the wicket and he was batting. He turned round (is it leg-side?) and hit the ball hard. I instinctively closed my eyes but put out my hands and caught him out. He was speechless, but soon recovered and said ‘*Shala, Oldfieldo dhorte partona*’ (even Oldfield could not have caught that ball). But for these small, insignificant, spicy eruptions, he was a great player and coach. He was a good tennis coach too. He helped many an upcoming youngster by coaching him and even giving a racket, shoes, etc.

Kalyanda played some football too. There was a friendly match between the Ashram Veterans Team and the J.S.A.S.A. Team to mark the opening of our Football Field (Sportsground) in 1952. The Mother “kicked off” the match. Nolinida, Tejenda, Anilda (Jhumur’s father), Udaisingh, Vishwanathda (Drawing Office), Kalyanda, etc. were of the Veteran’s Team. On the JSASA (Ashram 1st Team) team were Sunilda, Kanakda, Ranjuda, Mona... and I too was there. It was great fun, but for an incident—Kalyanda tripped or was charged and fell, broke an arm! So, sadly, this was the first and last time we saw Kalyanda play football.

One evening, in a corner of the Playground, there was a lively debate going on, on the merits and demerits of Games vis-a-vis Gymnastics. Kalyanda entered, and spoke up (he was a champion of Games) “What is there in Gymnastics? Even a monkey can be taught to do gymnastics.” So that was Kalyanda of the flashy bat and sharp and ready tongue.

Kalyanda took some classes too, for a few years. Physics and general science were his subjects (Sciences Appliquées). They (the classes) had a special air about them, for you could expect the unexpected. Once when a student, whose answers were marked ‘wrong’, pointed out that the text book we were studying supported him, Kalyanda from his chair declared ‘*Boi Bhool!*’ (the book is wrong)—and that was that. Later he changed

his occupation from culturing us to agriculture.

Kalyanda took up the New Paddy Land, a paddy field acquired by him for the Ashram. He then called himself a ‘chasha’, developed it and produced a good amount of paddy to supply the Ashram. He often took us along in his jeep and showed off his fields and the bounty they produced. On one of these outings when I asked why the Ashram could not have a banana plantation of its own, he offered to buy some land and put me up as in-charge, with all the amenities like scooter, house, etc. He would have done it immediately had I said “Yes”. But I did not, as I was already working at the Swimming Pool. I told him I wouldn’t mind taking up the job, *if* he could relieve me of the job I was at. This was not possible. The idea fizzled out.

Kalyanda had no one to assist him in those early ‘chasha’ days at the New Paddy Land. He would go in a jeep and supervise the work himself. Some of the workers resided on our land and worked in the fields. Later Kamal, a young man from Bengal, landed up in Pondicherry and fortuitously, was put to work under Kalyanda. He continues to reside there and run the show. He enjoyed his initiation and tutelage under Kalyanda and had a great regard for him. He told me that Kalyanda used to come to the fields, make a short inspection tour and then sit in the room. He sat there silent and pensive and some sort of serenity would pervade the place. He, Kamal, could not and dared not speak and break that pervasion.

One old and aged worker resided on the premises. He, on an occasion, for some (misguided) reason, took 4 or 5 casuarina poles, without asking (either one of the K’s) and kept them in his hut. This, we would normally term as ‘theft’. Kamal ferretted them out and removed them and informed Kalyanda. Kalyanda did not show any great appreciation for the piece of sleuthing. He smiled and was silent for a while. Then, in a quiet and kindly tone asked Kamal: “*Tumi oke ato lojja dile keno?*” (Why did you shame him so?) He continued in the same tone: “Kamal, think well and quietly, and tell me who amongst us is not a thief?” Kamal was nonplussed, but took time out to ponder over the matter. He finally came to the embarrassing conclusion that he could not think of a “non-thief”.

Kamal’s awe and admiration only increased in later days when he went to visit Kalyanda in his house. Kalyanda was then recuperating from an accident. He had a rib broken which would not permit him to lie down. He did not permit himself any medicines. So, he was sitting on a reclining chair for 3 days! There seemed to be no signs of fatigue on his face or body or any strain on his mind. He seemed cheerful and smiling—his usual self. When asked he said: “Oh! such things happen. One has to take them in one’s stride.”

Kalyanda had another love—apart from teaching, sports and agriculture. He liked, owned and drove some good cars. He had a Jeep, a Jaguar and a vintage flashy red M.G. Sports. As all else he did, he drove too with élan and elegance. He did drive well, often steering with one hand. The other hand may be holding a bouquet of flowers as he once did and nudged a three wheeler. Fortunately for Kalyanda, the three wheeler happened to be moving on the wrong side of the road and so had to bear the blame. The bouquet went

unnoticed. I happened to see it, but kept mum. He also happened to back his car into a lamp-post. He cursed the Régie d'Electricité saying '*Shalara post kothay putte hoi janena*' (they don't even know where to place a post).

Kalyanda by his own account could smoke like a chimney. He had given it up in his earlier days here, but resumed it later—at least occasionally. He even asserted that the ensuing smoke would keep away mosquitoes and other insects (so it would—if dense enough). He went through the Sundarbans, without hosting mosquitoes, by this simple (pleasant) ruse.

This was the Kalyanda *we* actually saw, talked to and played with. At 80 he moved and drove around like a man half his age. The smile too never left his face, nor the mind and heart their warmth and ebullience. One may wonder why and how he was all that he was. Let us now go back in time to delve a little deeper into his life. The answer may lie there.

(Much of what follows about his experiences is in his own language. He speaks about himself in the third person. I have quoted him from the book '*Breath of Grace*', his words indicated by quotation marks.)

Kalyanda was for a short time in England, engaged professionally. One day as he was sitting by a window reading and looking out at a nearby cathedral: "A clear command came from somewhere he knew nothing about, a gentle but firm voice told him: 'Why linger here any longer, go home.' The more he turned it in his mind, the command he had received, the more insistent it became." Kalyanda arranged a release from the firm he was working with and "within a week he turned his steps homeward."

"Back home he directed his steps towards his boyhood love—the forests. Once again the solitude he had missed for so many years was his. One day while waiting to go out, sitting close to the fringe of a dense jungle, all on a sudden he found the entire forest of trees, shrubs and the few persons moving about, including himself, were all merged in a vibrating dance of life, everything was a-throb with an inner pulsation that filled his heart with a joy he had never tasted before."

The third experience was as follows: "As he was walking alone, by and by he came to a small hill, a sudden impulse made him climb to the top. It was just before sunset and as he sat on the top and looked at the sun, the surroundings seemed to be blotted out and he saw only the setting sun, as he kept gazing on it there came out of the sun millions of suns and they all rushed towards him entering into his heart in an unending stream."

Kalyanda later recounted the last experience to Sri Aurobindo who explained it thus: "The Sun represents the Divine Truth, the same truth in infinite forms resides in the heart of man. Man in his heart has to find the infinite Truth hidden there. It is a clear indication to the seeker of the Truth."

Kalyanda's father died in an accident—"The only person who could have checked his heart's bent."

"Then as soon as the family affairs were settled he began journeying from one religious centre to another — Dakshineswar, Benaras and others." "He felt the chosen haven still eluding him. This went on for three years, till one day he learnt that his cousin

Dilip Kumar Roy was coming on a visit to his home town. Dilip had left his home nine years earlier, residing at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, having taken up a life of yoga.”

Kalyanda, from his childhood, admired Dilip very much. Dilip was there for 5 months, during which Kalyanda gleaned as much as he could about life in the Ashram. “A study of books by Sri Aurobindo began, heaping wonder upon wonder as he read, not only flooding his mind but his heart too began to stir and respond to the light of discovery rendering him very happy indeed. It seemed to him at that time a wonder why he had missed reading Sri Aurobindo’s books so far. Probably the hour had not yet struck, the striking being in the hands of Him who decides all.”

Kalyanda’s first Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was on 15th August 1938: “...Gladly and joyfully his head lowered at the beautiful feet of the Mother, feet like white lotuses, *sans pareil*, were they, and he felt a gentle touch as if reassuring him that to bow down next to the Master would not be such an ordeal. Then he turned to look straight into the eyes of the Master, with a mixed feeling of joy and reverence he placed his head on the feet of the Lord, beautiful and soft they were and his whole face sank into the very softness. Then a hand of great weight pressed his head deeper still into that softness. Lingering there for a while, a short while, he raised his head and once more looked into his eyes. What he saw there words cannot describe, even an infinitesimal part of it—the entire universe was there, his universe.”

No more may one wonder that Kalyanda seemed happy and smiling—as would one who had “merged into a vibrating dance of life and saw everything was a-throb with an inner pulsation that filled his heart with a joy he had never tasted before.” He himself concludes thus: “Since that day many years have gone by as he trod and is still treading the path, which is unending, resolved to go through, cost what it may, certain of reaching the goal to-day, tomorrow or perhaps after many lives, whenever the Master would choose to crown his efforts, if at all they were his. His days in the Ashram are wonderfully joyful, merged in the atmosphere pervading there; grateful, eternally grateful from the very bottom of his heart for the benedictions showered on him by the all-compassionate Gurus, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—to him the Supreme incarnated in dual form.”

This is the life-story of Kalyanda—a long, eventful and satisfyingly full one—starting off in a good, well-to-do family, youthful years hunting in the old teeming jungles, studentship in Europe (engineer), and finally life in the Ashram as a teacher, sportsman and farmer. A long innings indeed of 84 years when on 2nd of October 1993 he was “caught” (gathered) by the Great Wicket-keeper of Worlds.

The vintage wine bubbled over, when the cork popped, and lost itself into the heart of that “Sun from which a million suns rushed out to enter his heart”—so long ago on that small hill.

WHAT (OR WHO) IS A MOTHER?

As I was picking my daughter up at school, another mother I knew well rushed up to me. Emily was fuming with indignation. “Do you know what you and I are?” she demanded. Before I could answer, and I didn’t really have one handy, she blurted out the reason for her question. It seemed she had just returned from renewing her driver’s license at the County Clerk’s office. Asked by the woman recorder to state her occupation, Emily had hesitated, uncertain how to classify herself.

“What I mean is,” explained the recorder, “Do you have a job, or are you just a...?” “Of course I have a job,” snapped Emily. “I’m a mother.”

“We don’t list ‘mother’ as an occupation... ‘housewife’ covers it,” said the recorder emphatically.

I forgot all about her story until one day I found myself in the same situation, this time at our own Town Hall.

The Clerk was obviously a career woman, poised, efficient, and possessed of a high-sounding title like Official Interrogator or Town Registrar.

“And what is your occupation?” she probed.

What made me say it, I do not know. The words simply popped out. “I’m a Research Associate in the field of Child Development and Human Relations.”

The clerk paused, ball-point pen frozen in midair, and looked up as though she had not heard right. I repeated the title slowly, emphasizing the most significant words. Then I stared with wonder as my pompous pronouncement was written in bold, black ink on the official questionnaire.

“Might I ask,” said the clerk with new interest, “just what you do in your field?” Coolly, without any trace of fluster in my voice, I heard myself reply, “I have a continuing program of research (what mother doesn’t) in the laboratory and in the field (normally I would have said indoors and out). I’m working for my Masters (the whole darned family) and already have four credits (all daughters). Of course, the job is one of the most demanding in the humanities (any mother care to disagree?) and I often work 14 hours a day (24 is more like it). But the job is more challenging than most run-of-the-mill careers and the rewards are in satisfaction rather than just money.”

There was an increasing note of respect in the clerk’s voice as she completed the form, stood up, and personally ushered me to the door. As I drove into our driveway, buoyed up by my glamorous new career, I was greeted by my lab assistants — ages 13, 7, and 3. Upstairs I could hear our new experimental model (6 months) in the child-development program, testing out a new vocal pattern.

I felt triumphant! I had scored a beat on bureaucracy! And I had gone on the official records as someone more distinguished and indispensable to mankind than “just another mother.”

Motherhood...what a glorious career. Especially when there’s a title on the door.

The Images of Mother:

- 4 years of age — My Mommy can do anything!
8 years of age — My Mom knows a lot! A whole lot!
12 years of age — My Mother doesn't really know quite everything.
14 years of age — Naturally, Mother doesn't know that, either.
16 years of age — Mother? She's hopelessly old-fashioned.
18 years of age — That old woman? She's way out of date!
25 years of age — Well, she might know a little bit about it.
35 years of age — Before we decide, let's get Mom's opinion.
45 years of age — Wonder what Mom would have thought about it?
50 years of age — Wish I could talk it over with Mom.

(An e-mail from an unknown source)

THE WORLD MUST PASS THRU

THE world must pass thru deeper night
And death must take the birds in flight,
The hallways echo heavy feet,
And children weeping in their sleep.
Love lies dormant, hides,
Until the Light can fill the skies.

MARY HELEN

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

My First Impressions of India

“One day I’ll go to India and I’ll take you along, too,” I used to tell my younger brother when we were children. We both remember this now, and laugh; I couldn’t have been more than nine years old then—why India?

I grew up in a small town west of Olympia, of the Olympic Games; I hardly knew of India’s existence, let alone finding it on a world map. Yet, this was certain: one day I would go there. Well, I did.

It was an afternoon dream—a kaleidoscope of faces and events like an old Fellini film. Pain, searching and ugliness were there first, then beauty, calmness and release came.

...the unknown woman-girl took me out into the furrowed fields and the night.

We ran.

...the barking was closer now and our feet faltered.

We fell.

...the dogs reached and touched us, their breaths hot and fetid, their teeth on our flesh.

We were ripped apart.

...knowing we were dead, I stood up and walked into a grey-white Greek village; there was a crone sitting at a doorstep. Dressed in black, she was busy knitting.

She and I did not look at each other.

...upon entering the house, I saw the children by the fireplace, a boy and a girl. They welcomed me and made a place for me to sit beside them. They asked no questions and the three of us simply talked; there was nobility in the exchange and when I stood up to go there were no farewells – we would meet again.

I left.

Outside, the village was transmuting itself as abstract ideas were replacing its forms. A ray appeared – descending from high, transparent and glowing softly, its colour of the palest green, water-like: an exquisite image. I settled into it feet first and let myself go.

I did not ask where to or why.

A few days later Martino and I were in India, landing in New Delhi just as the sun was about to dip over the horizon. Stepping out of the plane and looking at the ruddy red ball setting, I felt a sense of importance at our arrival. It was still hot. For a tiny moment I stood still at the top of the steps leading down from the plane and took in the surrounding reality: the sun setting over the West I had come from, at my feet the East I had just arrived in. The heat was heady with smells unknown, yet I welcomed their abundance. Oddly, they seemed as familiar as those of the dried up grass and the thyme of my Aegean summers – memory-fields of time overlapping, flux and universality. In that instant, I accepted them.

It was dark by the time we came out onto spacious avenues. The ancient bus carried

us through the evening and, amidst the shadows, I glimpsed details of a new reality, rugged and delicate: a cow on her way home, faces lit by fires burning at the roadside, unknown lives lived out in the open. On our way to the city, the sense of a special arrival continued without any strangeness or surprise in it. Oddly again, I felt a sweet surge in my heart for all that surrounded me.

To the question *Why India?* I have still to find an answer. Here and now, the question recalls memories which are in themselves fulfilling. There and then, the sounds on the streets, the children, the women, the colours and the smells, the whole living reality of the land justified its existence and made questions unnecessary.

Twelve months that first journey to India lasted, a full one-year divided into periods or cycles of experience. The first cycle was when our eyes (never dazzled or surprised) looked at, saw, seized and stowed away all that kept them wide open. Assisting them, there were emotions, reason and reflections, feelings.

At Ranagpur we were let into the Jain temple only to meet with nature dancing free in between its walls. Aesthetic perfection seemed to be the purpose of the building's existence, yet the aestheticism was not an end unto itself. The wind and the birds played with little bells lined up on the roof, the nearby hills were dressed in all possible hues of green, and there was a river, too—everything in accordance, as if a stage where all and everything played a part. It was dusk when we entered the temple—with the guard closing his eyes and refusing to see us—and there, as if prompted by its atmosphere, we abandoned ourselves to the structure.

From somewhere we could hear the sound of music; we had climbed up on the roof and night had come. Almost full, the moon was hanging in the firmament, serene and beautiful; like us, Selene too, the celestial Greek goddess of old, was looking on. Her silver light shone through the marble building as it proclaimed its dimensions in space. It was not an ordinary architectural statement of structure and style this temple; rather, we felt it to be an expression of freedom and identification of the human with the One, it made one perceive the original Logos as eternal and admit creation as its sum.

There was dancing downstairs and the music we had heard was accompanying it. From up high, we could see girls in a dance-circle and women playing the tambourines. There was the pulse-like sound of a gong too, its sound reminiscent of a throb, a mode and a need. Dancing bodies followed the flames of the oil lamps burning all around and mingled with the shadows they cast. The exertion brought forth hard breathing and a lingering smell of body odour filled the air, heavy already with incense. Twinkling stars and the constant ringing of bells and tambourines witnessed the offering as the gong kept time, its beat a constant reminder. We could see the dance-circle widening and opening up with the entrance of women and the tambourines, we could hear the slow, epic sound of the gong calling and returning, going away and coming back.

I did not join in. High up there on the roof we sat and looked on. Just as at the performance of an ancient Greek drama performance, we remained only spectators.

The second cycle brought acceptance and understanding. Personal experiences and queries were assimilated and faces acquired more determined roles; reading them be-

came a little more dynamic and real. People's speech gained tone and timbre and different languages emerged with their own idioms and nuances; same with the dress. Through the process, we too became part-participants, no longer spectators only.

In Kerala, the sister-friend and I were cooking, chatting and laughing in her kitchen. The grinding stone occupied one corner, the fireplace another. Her son clutched at her sari as the mother sang and talked, cooked and smiled whilst I smiled back and listened to all the village gossip and the stories she told. I felt an instinctive contentment swelling in me and, through it, I let myself be. The fact that I hardly knew the language she spoke bothered me little. There are many ways to meet and be with a person, means other than those a tongue may employ.

Seven months into our year in India, my eyes met with the spontaneity of matter. It was early morning still and, as the rays of the sun fell on it, a regular miracle of beauty in form was revealed: a little weed, growing alongside the bougainvillaea at the parapet. Marvelling at the sight, I reached for it and tried to see what I was *truly* seeing.

A symphony in silver-gold was shaped along stems with blossoms so tiny they could be seen only as a unit. I brought out my magnifying glass; with a closer view, I thought, I would see and understand better. Indeed, there were crystals and forms, varied hues and tints, pulsating and happening all at once. My curiosity scanned details alive with light. Unable to contain myself, I started singing, then, tenderly, I placed the little weed among the few and beloved tokens of our journey by making a little drawing of it.

Next day, a friend invited me for tea and a walk around her garden. Golden shafts came down through the foliage, and the late afternoon carried with it its usual quiet and meditative undertones. The friend pointed here and there and my eyes followed her explanations. The garden had a certain wilderness, left as it were to its own resources, yet it had a charming abundance and variety. Just as we were almost through, the friend bent and delicately uprooted something: a twin of my little weed.

"And this is Humility," she said.

Last was the cycle of choice. Decisions were made and there appeared a truth simple and pure, one that had so far remained unknown: there are no accidents in Time. There is only the sudden clarity of points coming together, points that forever exist in the Cosmos, yet are left unread because of ignorance or lack of guidance. When the disciple is ready, the teacher will come, will happen. Thus, there isn't only chance in the circumstance.

The cosmos is no accident in Time;
 There is a meaning in each play of Chance,
 There is a freedom in each face of Fate.¹

Somewhere I had once read a Koan, a question asked by a Zen master. It had intrigued and followed me awhile. What is the sound made by one hand clapping? Ruminating on it, brought on an aspiration: would that the mind gaped void of facts more often, would

1. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 271.

that it stayed virgin and empty of thoughts, would that it was given more easily to the redemption of what *is*.

One evening, I scribbled in my journal this utterance, at once a wish and a prayer:

Oh, Aristophanes of the Universe, Child god and Dancer god, may my life be yours, through You, for You, because of You.

Shortly before we left for India, I had made a little painting. There was the sun (or was it, perhaps, a full moon bright with light? I could never tell!), a mask-like face dreaming and waiting with closed eyes, a tidal wave, and an albatross flying and aiming straight into the centre of that sun-moon. These must be some kind of symbols, I had thought to myself.

Now, in Athens, two years later and after India, I continue the allusions—again through a painting: the blue is Krishna’s and of the Aegean Sea, deep and crystal-like. Krishna himself I depict with generous daubs and strokes that form white outlines; just his face and his flute can be seen. In front is the Woman, the Female Eternal, unfolding and expanding herself through a dancing pose. She seems to now-come-now-go, yet she remains uncaught and incomprehensible. She is embraced by the elegant curves of a golden Sanskrit OM; she defies its limits yet within them she finds herself contained.

More symbols.

Dawns by the Aegean Sea have taught me much. Every day found me perched up on a rock or swimming laps in waters filled with freshness. Each ray and every glimmer offered a sense of liberation. As if disclosing secrets, they opened up into ever-expanding realities and immersed me in harmonies of sound. There was a subtle enormity dressed in light divine, and I reached for it with all I could.

The mind was of no use; it groped and made noises, it tried to measure and fathom. But this essence cannot be measured thus; for a communion with it, other parts of the being had to be employed. I was being taught a simple grammar, its meanings and indications often passed me by, at other times they filtered through.

Once, on the island of Paros, I forgot myself, such beauty was there: the light in the water, the plants swaying in the current, the pebbles smooth and rounded, and that throbbing sound enveloping it all. With eyes open, I was floating facedown in the sea with the noon-sun burning on my back. I was so absorbed, it took me awhile before I remembered to breathe again!

“I hear you are Greek,” Sashi, the Keralan teacher, introduced himself, and continued: “Our humble hut is awaiting you.” We went. The hut was indeed humble, clean and tidy, austere in its simplicity. Sashi’s Sushila was as good as she was beautiful; the bright and twinkling eyes of their children made me think of stars.

It was mostly Sashi who spoke: recounting, questioning, and even confessing. Sushila, crouched by the grinding stone, was preparing the rice for the next day’s idlis. She kept looking at me and smiled and I kept doing the same till we both had a giggling fit. Dusk was falling.

“The snakes will be coming out soon” someone said. The hut was resting under a cluster of coconut trees and was alive with a sweet loving calmness its inhabitants provided. There was a bench, a straw-mat on the floor, steaming hot coffee passed around, and books everywhere. Kazantzakis, Elytis, Kavafis and Sappho came to keep us company – Sashi the teacher knew them all and called them in to introduce them.

“I dreamt,” he confessed, “and in my dream Kazantzakis appeared. It was while I was reading *Jesus Recrucified*. I woke up and, automatically, my hand wrote: ‘Dear Mr. Kazantzakis, when I read you I suffer so.... Deeply buried fragments and shards of myself rise up and bloom.... Onto the thorn of pain I fall and bleed....’ ”

We did not meet any snakes on the way back and our host, who was waiting for us at the threshold, told us about Shushila and Shashi and how they fell in love and got married, although from different castes...

Dawns and sunsets, books and meetings, places, spaces, people and disclosures—they all come along “when one sets out on the journey...”²

Lena, my high school friend, had seen us off at the airport. Just before parting, she had given me a card with a gaily-painted boat and the sea; at the back she had scribbled: “And may your way be long...” It was. The city³ did not follow us and to many other cities we arrived. We saw villages and observed customs, we met people and looked at trees, and new birds and flowers we came to know.

Sarita, whose name means river in Sanskrit, was chasing butterflies out in the garden. Chasing? No, butterflies can’t be chased; butterflies are poetry and beauty, butterflies are abstract definitions of life in the ephemeral. Sarita and her sister danced with the butterflies in the garden, figures of the absurd that discerns harmony. It was October in Delhi and the birds had started coming out. It was the hour when the day lessens and fragrances become entities. Tea with ginger and cardamom was almost ready and Sarita was laughing happily—three days shy of her eighteenth birthday, and, oh, so pretty.

Another time, in rural Gujarat, music provided ties.

Late afternoon and forms were regaining those values that uplift. The river quietly carried its waters, fires were lit in the village, children were returning home and the sun was stealing through the silhouettes of the coconut trees on the horizon. I could see the hills far away as I sat on a boulder by the river. In the surrounding peace, a melody rose to my lips: “Yannis mine, what has dirtied your handkerchief?”⁴ The words rose up in me to

2. A reference to the poem *Ithaca*, by K. P. Kavafis, an Alexandrine-Greek poet of the 19th century.

When you set out on the way to Ithaca,
Wish for the way to be long,
Filled with adventures, filled with knowledge.

3. Another reference from yet another of Kavafis’s poems *The City*:

You said, “I will go to another land, I will go to another sea.
Another city shall be found better than this.”
New places you shall never find, you’ll not find other seas.
The city still shall follow you.

4. A Greek folk song.

meet the birds, the river, the hills and a village cow. Nostalgia—in its ancient Greek meaning—was embedded into the lyrics, nostalgia as the painful longing for the return home.⁵ I savoured and sang them, stripped them however from any longings or wistfulness, neither of which I felt.

Later, after dinner, the village girls demanded with laughter: “Geet, Kati-ben, Geet”—(Song, Kati-sister, song.) What to sing for them? Yannis and his sorrow reached my lips again. By the second verse, the girls followed effortlessly and filled in the melody—music was proving its own dynamic existence.

Later on still, I too shared in the notes and rhythms of their tradition.

Now, after the return, I recall memories and note down feelings, I project slides on the wall and keep wondering: Can I possibly describe all these fine touches? How and what can I say about the words, the talks, the glances, the feelings and all that inhabited its own authentic space? Is it really so very different? The colours and the smells, the perfumes, the materials, the cloth, the talk, even love? After all, what *is* that I carried back from India?

Explanations are ever subjective. Poverty, riches, laughter and weeping – it all exists in India, just as it does here and elsewhere; they are exactly the same, perhaps a little more obvious, so that they scream and provoke at times.

How do I explain and what do I tell about all this that seems so simple and transparent to my mind? Can I be convincing when even arguments aren’t necessary? How can I say that hunger, poverty and misery and the acidity of the morrow that isn’t going to be any better did not touch me, did not wound me. That sentimental sensation of pity and remorse did not move me. I had bananas in my bag and those I gave to the beggars, as my own version of compassion and help. Further, the awareness of my position in relation to theirs brought in the same awkwardness I feel in the inexplicable routine of the newspapers, the politics, even the world as it usually goes about.

But, why hide it, I took more than I gave. It was the peoples’ tolerance and contentment I tied firmly around the heart as guide and protection. When I recall their smiles, I smile too, and this makes me flighty and inexplicably childlike—just like them, just like their world: a pauper today, a raja tomorrow. Next life to come is, will be, should be better; infinite are a circle’s points.

Somewhere, somehow, they know:

Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul’s acceptance is his own.⁶

It was morning and Kumuda, as usual, was cleaning up our room while I was appreciating a miniature in a book.

When Kumuda saw Krishna’s figure embraced by his beloved Radha, she started

5. Nostalgia derives from two root-words, *nostos*: the return home and *algos*: pain.

6. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 542.

singing and dancing. Her voice was not spent in the magic of heavens; it brought them, simply, to my feet. Her hands told me of wondrous rivers, her eyes of nights with moon and without; she chanted of life, waters, flowers, love and life: about Krishna who is in everything....

These are the touches I was talking about. At the beginning we called India a womb. We felt totally protected and invulnerable in her embrace, and there we let ourselves be. It was in that womb of hers where we lost and accepted our freedom; brave and ready with the abandonment of trust, we opened our senses, mind and heart to her.

In Lonavala, where the hills seem to be eternal embodiments of symbols, Pankaj initiated us into the secrets and perfection of Urdu-gazals, the poetic harmony in music. Late in the evening we entered his room. It was settled with carpets, adorned with bronze, silver and ivory and there we sat cross-legged to enjoy the music. The smoke and fragrance of burning sandalwood incense mingled with Pankaj's translations, with the moon rising outside the window and with the cricket's song continuing unchallenged.

In Periyar, South India, we let our bodies absorb the energy the jungle created; the tiger pug-marks did not scare us nor did the bisons when, annoyed by our presence, they started bellowing twenty metres away. The grass was high, golden.

On a Bombay street the urchin walking beside us kept beat by—

One, two – cha-cha-cha!

One, two – cha-cha-cha!

He followed us and repeated his existence in the eternity of the night. He was begging amongst the skyscrapers in a bizarre display of symbiosis.

Infinite are the points of a circle—the dimensions of the days, of the hours and of the year in India have their own fabric, feel and essence. They stamped the heart, they live on in memory, they will, eventually, change my life....

KATI WIDMER

(Written in Greek in the autumn of 1985, shortly after returning to Greece from a year's travels in India. This is an adapted translation.)

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO'S letters do not sermonize nor is there any attempt in them to do so. They are informal, of the epistolary form. Sri Aurobindo distinctly states in one of his letters to disciple as follows: "It is not always safe to apply practically to oneself what has been written for another. Each sadhak is a case by himself and one cannot always or often take a mental rule and apply it rigidly to all who are practising the Yoga.... Each sadhak has a nature or turn of nature of his own and the movement of the yoga of two sadhaks, even where there are some resemblances between them, is seldom exactly the same."¹

Again he adds: "People often catch hold of something written by me or said by the Mother, give it an interpretation quite other than or far beyond its true meaning and deduce from it a suddenly extreme and *logical* conclusion which is quite contrary to our knowledge and experience. It is natural, I suppose, and part of the game of the hostile forces; it is so much easier to come to vehement logical conclusions than to look at the Truth which is many-sided and whole."²

"I thought it was understood that what I wrote to you about persons was private. Experiences one's own or others' if one comes to know of them, should not be talked about or made a matter of gossip. It is only if there can be some spiritual profit to others and even then if they are experiences of the past that one can speak of them. Otherwise it becomes like news of Abyssinia or Spain, something common and trivial for the vital mass-mind to chew or gobble."³

Sri Aurobindo's above advice and instructions are applicable to individual sadhaks regarding their sadhana.

The bulk of letters are categorised and arranged on principles of Yoga, the different planes of the mind, the definitions of the terms ('Calm', 'Peace', 'Quiet', 'Silence'; or 'Sadhana', 'Tapasya', 'Aradhana', 'Dhyan'), the Path of the 'being', history, politics, dreams, the interpretations of particular visions, etc. We admire editorial patience and tact in arranging the letters in two Tomes: *On Yoga* and *Bases of Yoga*. But the personal human touch is lost when they are arranged. In spite of this difficulty Nirodbaran writes: "These letters find a place amongst his finest writings. All this led to an immense volume of letters, and, equally, to their immense variety. Of the thirty volumes of his writings which were published as the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL), three entire volumes with a total of 1800 pages comprise his letters. And there are hundreds yet unpublished. The published letters have been grouped into four parts and each part into several sections. The first part alone contains the following sections from which you can get an idea of the range of subjects covered: The Supramental Evolution, Integral Yoga and Other Paths, Religion, Morality, Idealism and Yoga, Planes and Parts of the Being, The Divine and the Hostile Powers, The Purpose of Avatarhood, Rebirth, Fate and Free-Will, Karma and Heredity, etc. The second, third and fourth parts consist of letters concerned more directly with sadhana and there is no aspect of Integral Yoga which Sri

Aurobindo has left uncovered. These letters form a perfect supplement to his major works, such as *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*.²⁴

Whatever it be, the bulk of correspondence became unwieldy and began to take a heavy toll of Sri Aurobindo's precious time, if not his energy. Further the utility of the correspondence was beginning to be over. The volume of correspondence was severely cut down and practically came to an end in 1938. The privilege of writing to him was extended, however, to three or four disciples on specific subjects in which they were interested, like Arts, Poetry, Literature, etc. One will appreciate the letters of Sri Aurobindo entitled *Life-Literature-Yoga*, and Dilip's *Among the Great, Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, and *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*. Two volumes of Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* are valuable in several respects. One can read these letters and correspondences with their humour and humanity.

Nirodbaran writes: "There are two other categories of letters to which I should make at least a passing reference. Occasionally in his letters Sri Aurobindo wrote about some incident in his own life or drew upon his own life or drew upon his personal experiences to explain or illustrate the subject matter of the letter. Sometimes he would also correct misstatements about himself which appeared in others' writings. These letters have been grouped together and appear in a separate volume of the SABCL. We cannot be sufficiently grateful for those occasional reminiscences and revelations, but they form the main source of the little knowledge that we have about his life and experiences. Then there are Sri Aurobindo's letters on Arts, Literature and, in particular, on Poetry. Sri Aurobindo is the supreme Poet of Yoga, and he encouraged his disciples also to write poetry. The inspiration and help he provided and the latent poet in many disciples who had earlier neither the capacity for writing poems nor even an inclination towards it. I was myself one of those who came under the spell of the Muse, although I had never before written a line of poetry. J. A. Chadwick (Arjava) was another and I can give many more instances. At Cambridge Chadwick had been a brilliant scholar of mathematical philosophy and had little interest in poetry. At the Ashram he blossomed into a fine poet and wrote exquisite poems which were published after his untimely death. Sri Aurobindo asked the disciples who wrote poetry to submit their compositions to him without hesitation and in letter after letter he would give his comments, unstinted in his praise where it was due, and yet pointing out the weaknesses and imperfections, sometimes even rewriting the whole poem. In this way he taught us prosody and the finer points of poetic diction and rhythm. It was an education in itself, but Sri Aurobindo taught us to write poetry as part of our sadhana, not for the sake of name or fame. Besides, in his letters he would occasionally make passing comments on poems and poets, both past and present. Even these casual observations are gems of literary criticism and always throw a new light on the subject.

"Apart from the range and variety of subjects in these letters, their language has a special quality. From the excerpts I have already given, you may have noticed the luminous clarity (Chadwick once remarked that it had 'light without heat'—like his eyes!) which goes straight to the mind and heart of the reader. And its perfect finish is all the

more amazing when we consider the incredible speed with which Sri Aurobindo wrote...Sri Aurobindo never 'wrote down' to the disciples nor did he deliver sermons from a lofty height. The tone is invariably courteous and compassionate with hardly ever a harsh word even where the disciple is gravely at fault."⁵

Dilip Kumar Roy honoured his Guru Sri Aurobindo as the Poet-Maker. In the following passage he writes: "In this I am going to transcribe a part of my experience on which I based the remark, less to convince others than to state—as truthfully as I can—some of the data which carried conviction to me, personally. Those who are not interested in the title of the present chapter or are likely to find it tendentious may well pass it by. I know of course that what I am claiming here is liable to be misunderstood since my chief datum is going to be my own poetic flowering. But I have thought it fit to risk it because nobody else will be able to present the material I possess and so if I keep silent, a great trait of Sri Aurobindo's character will stay for ever unknown; to wit, the pains he took, with almost incredible patience, not only to help those who wanted to give a poetical expression to spiritual truth and experience, but also to knock the bottom out of a prevalent false notion that Yoga belongs to the province of silence to the exclusion of expression. Also it was because he was a great poet that it was given to him to assay such truths about spiritual poetry which had been his *grande passion* long before he started Yoga. He himself once said (as one of his earliest disciples, Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, testifies in his preface to Gurudeva's *Collected Poems*) that he had been first and last a poet: it was only later he became a Yogi. To be more explicit, I shall now hazard writing about what I came to know from indubitable personal experience to be true: that a poet can be made through Yogic powers and that he achieved it consciously in quite a few of us."⁶

The True Guru-Shishya relationship reveals with full delight the personal touch in Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*.

NIRODBARAN: No joy, no energy, no cheerful. Don't like to read or write—as if a dead man were walking about. Do you understand the position? Any personal experience?

SRI AUROBINDO: I quite understand; often had it myself devastatingly. That's why I always advise people who have it to cheer up and buck up.

To cheer up, buck up and the rest if you can, saying "Rome was not built in one day"—if you can't, gloom it through till the sun rises and the little birds chirp and all is well.

Looks however as if you were going through a training of Vairagya. Don't much care for vairagya. Myself, always avoided the beastly thing, but had to go through it partly, till I hit on samata as a better track. But samata is difficult, vairagya is easy, only damnably gloomy and uncomfortable."⁷

NIRODBARAN: My hard labour and effort deprive me of the joy of creation and discourage with a dread of the work. You say that this is because I am an "efforter" and "however". All very well, Sir, but have you shown me the Grand Trunk Road of non-effort—not to speak of leading the way?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are two ways of arriving at the Grand Trunk Road. One is climb and struggle and effortise, (like the pilgrim who travels India prostrating and measuring the way with his body,—that's the way of effort). One day you suddenly find yourself on the G.T.R. when you least expect it. The other is to quiet the mind to such a point that a great Mind of mind can speak through it (I am not here talking of the supramental). You will do neither. Your mind refuses to be quiet—your vital kicks at the necessity of effort. One too active, the other too lazy. How can I show you the G.T.R. when you refuse either way of reaching it.”⁸

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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6. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (1984 ed.), by Dilip Kumar Roy, pp. 214, 215.
7. Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (1983), p. 605.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 504.

ENCHANTMENT

IN a glade of ancient hemlock wood,
There lies a hidden spring,
And those who taste its waters
Can hear the moonlight sing.

For the weaving of enchantment,
And the working of the spell,
They drink the silver waters
Where mystic powers dwell.

Who has heard the weeping loon
When twilight dims the day?
Or who has seen the swans take flight
As summer fades away?

'Tis the moon unveils their magic
To the child who finds her spring,
And her crystal chalice is a pledge
Of wonders that take wing.

She weaves an emerald ivy wreath
For those who must drink deep;
Their songs and visions lead the soul
Into a crystal sleep.

Comes then the rest of harp and voice
In the waters of the moon,
As priestess to her bard bestows
The long-awaited boon.

Where herons haunt a hidden shore,
The moonchild seeks a nest
In timeless waves of magic light
Where dreams come home to rest.

Beneath the bending hemlock bough,
Forevermore alone,
He merges in the ancient spring
His heart has always known.

ROGER CALVERLEY

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

Two Early Risers

To deny the spiritual quest of Tagore is a serious critical blindness. Of late, this blindness has become infectious in Bengal because of Ketaki Kusari Dyson's discovery of the passionate nature in the mature Tagore.¹ This is not a new discovery, as his poetry was never secretive and this does not degrade the spiritual side of Tagore, the man. If 'spiritual' means everything equal to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Chaitanya, then of course it is another matter. But, it would be a serious critical mistake to underestimate the enlightened soul-status of Tagore. Both Tagore and Sri Aurobindo woke up to the mystic smell quite early in life. For Sri Aurobindo, it was not quite obvious because religion was not his cup of tea in England. Yet we should not overlook the quality of endurance and equanimity in the school boy, who had no complaints against Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, a negligent father quite often forgetting to send in the money required by his sons living far away. Also, Sri Aurobindo's early poetry written in England speaks of his early approaches to Nature and the Divine:

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool
As to parched lips a running pool;
Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep
And only moonlit rivulets creep
Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,
To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.²

In *Songs to Myrtilla*, he can already listen to the "footsteps of invisible things" and see the night "leaning on a luminous cloud". The secret voice of the Divine can be heard when Nature smiles and love is awake with its mysterious signals through a rose. The vision of Beauty at the end of *Songs to Myrtilla* is not just Keatsian; it is a prescience of a great discovery to be made by the poet of *Savitri*.

Tagore was also an early riser and time and again he tells us that his is not a one-pointed search. He wishes to be lost in the Many with a constant memory of the One. He speaks about his many-branching desires. And yet who could deny his awakening?

When I was eighteen, a sudden spring breeze of religious experience came to my life for the first time and passed away leaving in my memory a direct message of spiritual reality. One day while I stood watching at early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist had in a moment lifted from my sight, and the morning light in the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the commonplace was removed from

all things and men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind; and this is the definition of beauty. That which was memorable in this experience was its human message, the sudden expansion of my consciousness in the super-personal world of man. The poem I wrote on the first day of my surprise was called *The Awakening of the Waterfall*. The waterfall, whose spirit lay dormant in its ice-bound isolation, was touched by the sun and, bursting in a cataract of freedom, it found its finality in an unending sacrifice, in a continual union with the sea. After four days the vision passed away, and the lid hung down upon my inner sight. In the dark, the world once again put on its disguise of obscurity.³

This is a mystical experience presented in terms of aesthetics, unlike the very clear experiences of Sri Aurobindo in Alipur jail, which he records in very clear terms. Tagore was aware of his mysterious presentation of mystical experience. He was fond of it; he indulged in it throughout his life. The Bengali language as we have received it from Tagore is a feminine language and is ideally suited to the mystic mind or the borderline romantic. The expression of the Truth in its essential nakedness was not the aim of Tagore. That makes Sri Aurobindo a less attractive poet for the general audience because only very few in the present humanity can realise those experiences.

Tagore is a wonderful preparation for understanding the absolutely one-pointed poetry of Sri Aurobindo. The Godward emotion was a reality in Tagore's personal life and works. It remained throughout with him, sometimes very intensely and sometimes in a subterranean manner. That gave a delicate charm and beauty to his borderline experiences, as in *Gitanjali* and *The Post Office*, and helped him develop his integral philosophy, which links him up with Sri Aurobindo. The early riser never went to sleep again. He attempted to assort his aesthetics with his inner realisations. There is no doubt about his realisations of the more through his doctrine of the surplus:

I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer questions about the problem of evil, or about what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy.⁴

Sisirkumar Ghose has spoken of this queer assortment of aesthetics and spirituality in Tagore and has drawn our notice to his effort at integral realisation. Ghose was a staunch Aurobindonian and as such it was easy for him to understand Tagore's effort in the true light:

Tagore's life and works were, then, not merely an aesthete's adventure, dreaming of the surplus and the far-away; they also involve characteristic, enlarging moral choices in terms of an integrated or harmonious living. The founding of a school at Santiniketan (1901), later to be a university, was part of the education in fullness. Beginning with his own unhappy memory of school, which he described as a blend

of hospital and gaol, he concentrated on children and emphasized creativity, the need for atmosphere and natural surroundings. The aim was neither ascetic nor revivalistic but integrative.⁵

Both the poets were drawn to Nature and God in their teens, but both were interested in experiencing life. They refused to reject life. All the tastes of life were welcome. Both were thinking of this earth, the ways to beautify or transform it. The labour began early in their lives. They dreamt. Here is young Aurobindo dreaming of man's future:

The old shall perish; it shall pass away,
Expunged, annihilated, blotted out;
And all the iron bands that ring about
Man's wide expansion shall at last give way.⁶

While Sri Aurobindo was a lonely traveller, Tagore inherited the principles of the Upanishads from his father. He could see his inside and outside simultaneously and never lost sight of the bridge between the two. He possibly learnt this lesson from his father at a very early age. Tagore's early poetry will testify to it. Like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore realised the value of his country quite early in his life. As a poet, he touched his native tradition earlier than Sri Aurobindo. It was just great luck to have such fantastic Indians around. And the greatest luck was his father's company!

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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ONE HAS YET TO LEARN IN LIFE

(Continued from the issue of May 2002)

3

THERE is one proverb 'What of being educated, if not experienced' or 'What of having knowledge, if not practising'. It is essential for one to be practical too in life. One does not succeed without it. Knowledge and education are not enough for being practical. One has to be experienced too. There are several ways to gain experience but the experience from which one obtains practical knowledge is the interaction with persons and situations. The more we face the challenging situations, the more we get the practical experience. The same thing can be said of human interaction. In any journey one has interaction with both persons and situations. That is why travelling is so useful.

Once I was travelling in a sleeper coach from New Delhi to Chennai. All berths were full and there was one young man on the facing berth. Normally I do not like any way-side passenger with an unreserved ticket and accommodation to come and sit on my berth or ask for permission to do so. However, this invariably happens in all the trains and with all the reserved-accommodation passengers. On the way at Bhopal one such middle-aged passenger entered and was about to sit on my berth when I politely said,

"Two of us have gone out on the platform and there is no spare room. All berths are reserved."

"Ok, I would sit just at the end of the berth. I shall get down at the next station," the passenger requested.

"Next station is due after three hours. Please get the reservation done and sit on your allotted berth. That will be comfortable for you as well as for us," I suggested.

"..." The passenger kept silent and quietly seated himself on the berth.

"This is just forcing yourself on us!" I protested.

"Please sit on my berth," the young man all of a sudden suggested to the passenger who with a victorious look at me, changed his seat. This interruption by the young man appeared to be somewhat out of tune with the situation and I thought he should not have been so accommodating because this amounted to encouraging a wrong practice. However, I thought it wise to keep quiet at that moment. Passengers from other stations continued to enter the coach seating themselves on the young man's berth as well as mine, and leaving at their destination without any restriction. I could no more object to this. In the evening when this practice of coming and going by way-side passengers stopped since night was approaching, I told the young man,

"You are certainly kind and considerate, but were you not inconvenienced by your liberal attitude?"

"No, Babuji, not at all. I thought you were inconvenienced and so I offered him a seat on my berth. They are unable to get accommodation elsewhere and that is why they bothered us. Where could they go after all?" the young man asked.

“Why, they should go to the second-class of which they have the ticket!” I said.

“There is only one unreserved coach in the second-class and that is very full,” he said.

“Then these people are wise since they can travel in reserved coaches with a second-class unreserved ticket and without bothering about our inconvenience, and we are fools who weeks before stand in a queue to get our reservation?” I implored.

“Yes, Babuji, you are right. But do you know that without reservation we would not have been allowed to board the train at Delhi? Also can we travel like these passengers from Delhi to Chennai and that too with luggage?” the young man asked.

“Your argument is irrelevant,” I said.

“I have just brought out the difference between reserved travel and unreserved travel and nothing more. Where is irrelevancy in it?” the young man said.

“Are you giving an argument in favour of way-side passengers?” I questioned.

“There is no question of argument or favour. It is the truth,” he said.

“The truth is that what these passengers do is the wrong practice,” I said.

“Babuji, these passengers cannot be blamed. Although they certainly do a wrong, the railway employees too do not do their duty and the passengers get an opportunity to misuse the liberty. Shortage of accommodation too encourages them to do so. It is under compulsion that they do this,” the young man mentioned making me understand.

“What then shall we do?” I asked.

“You must travel in the AC coach” the young man snapped.

“This is no argument that on being inconvenienced by unauthorised passengers, even on reserved accommodation we should spend more and get reservation in an AC coach instead,” I retorted.

“Babuji, do not take it otherwise. I mentioned the AC coach because no one without reservation is permitted to enter it and hence you would have been saved the trouble that you are facing here. However, I must tell you one thing that after sometime AC coaches will have the same fate as that of this sleeper coach. It’s a matter of some ten years. If the population continues to grow at the current rate, wherefrom will we have the additional coaches and rolling stock?” he said. It appeared that the young man was speaking the truth. Even then I continued the argument, “However, you do not bother about your inconvenience?”

“Babuji, when we get out to travel, we should forget about the inconvenience. While travelling we have to care for the convenience of each other. We should have a sense of adjustment. We should just brush aside the feeling of inconvenience in travel. The circumstances may not be favourable to us in travel, but we on our part can certainly be friendly in the circumstances and make our travel happier and enjoyable.”

Gradually I was beginning to appreciate his argument and understand the philosophy with which the young man seemed to live. He appeared to be an experienced and practical man. I advanced the final argument,

“Sometimes there are thefts too, resulting out of our goodness.”

“Yes, you are right, Babuji. We must be alert to this. However, all such passengers

are not thieves. Even then if there is a theft, we must take it as Divine Will. In any case we must continue to be good and humane and we must not take a passenger for thief out of fear of theft,” he said.

“Is it written on the person of a passenger that he is not a thief but a good person?” I asked a little irritated.

“For that matter that one is a thief, is also not written. Babuji, you seem to believe that each person is a thief unless proved otherwise. In fact it should be the opposite. Each person is good unless proved otherwise,” he said.

“So you believe in learning a lesson only on being deceived?” I said.

“No, Babuji, it’s not like that. It is as a matter of policy and spiritually more justified to get deceived than to consider someone bad without knowing it,” he said.

It appeared to me that the young man must have seen life very closely. He was very practical. He understood the purpose of life in its proper perspective and desired to live it with absolute happiness. I had become speechless at the depth of his understanding. I was feeling myself small inspite of being quite senior in age and experience. I felt this young man was better than myself.

This small incident became a lifetime lesson for me. In a brief interval of time the young man enacted some of the deeply inspiring thoughts of enlightenment in the Shrimadbhagwat-Geeta for a practical life. Things happen according to the Will of the Divine and so we must do our ‘karma’. Consider any situation as God’s creation and deal with it with all happiness. This is surrender to the Divine. Loving all is an important constituent of Divine Love and is manifested by adjustment, co-operation and sacrifice amongst beings. I was full of admiration and reverence for the young man for his faith in God, surrender and the ‘karma’ theory— all blended in one in him. I again had the feeling that this young man was better than myself and I had yet to learn many things in life.

(Concluded)

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

THE LAST GLANCE

I HAVE never seen a known man dying before my very eyes. This is a tremendous experience!

Years ago I saw Prakash as a boy of our Ashram school. After finishing his studies he had worked in various departments of the Ashram—lately in the Electricity Office.

Here, at the Senior Service 2 we are all very old people, ranging from 72 to 98. Prakash was only 51. One day I saw him taking his meals with us, as well as watching TV with us. I asked his father what had happened to Prakash. He replied that he had a heart attack. I did not believe it and joked with Prakash. I asked further as to why he left the physical education group. He answered: “After I turned forty I had been placed in the oldest men’s group along with my father. I was ashamed to march with my father side by side.” “What of that?” I quipped, “I have seen Robi Gupta marching in the same group with his father, Nolini Kanta Gupta. The Mother gave the name ‘Buddhiman’ to your father, meaning intelligent—which you are not!” He smiled. At all my admonitions he smiled.

Daily after dinner, we would sit side by side on a couch watching TV. After commenting on various points, particularly on sports, we agreed almost on all points. We grew friendly with each other in spite of the difference in our ages. On the fateful night, as usual, he sat between Dr. Vishwa and myself, watching TV. Suddenly he showed some disturbing signs for which Dr. Vishwa tried to help him. At once I got up and asked Prakash to lie down flat on his back. The attending sister called Vishwabandhu who at once came up from downstairs, gave Prakash a tablet to be kept under his tongue. Soon Dr. Datta arrived and asked Prakash where it was paining. Prakash pointed to the left side of his chest. Dr. Datta gave him an injection.

After that, Prakash suddenly upturned his head and face towards me as I was standing just behind his head. He glanced at me, eyeball to eyeball, and then closed his eyes. He was carried off to Nursing Home where he soon died.

The message of his last glance was clear: “Now, do you believe that I too could have a heart attack?”

ABANI SINHA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Wager of Ambrosia: A Study of Jnaneshwari, by R. Y. Deshpande. Published by Ultra Publications, 676/13, 12th Cross, 4th Main, M. C. Layout, Vijayanagar, Bangalore 560-040. Pages: 147. Price: Rs. 150.00.

NONE is held in greater veneration by the Marathi-speaking people than the thirteenth century Yogi-Poet, the Adi-Kavi of Marathi, Sant Jnaneshwar. Not even the great Shivaji, nor the Saint-Poets Ramdas and Tukaram can equal him in the adulation received from scholars, devotees and mystics alike. Born in a poor Brahmin family ostracised by the society in pursuance of the ruling of orthodoxy, for the alleged non-compliance of formal rules by their parents, Jnaneshwar with his two brothers and a sister had to undergo tremendous hardships as children. From all accounts it seems that yogic knowledge came so naturally to him that his doing sadhana, a born yogi as he was, looks like a concession to the general rule that a path must be followed to arrive at the goal. He reached the peak of yogic realisation at such tender age that he could produce his most acknowledged work, *Jnaneshwari*, at the age of fifteen.

Therefore to study and compare Jnaneshwar in the light of the greatest Yogi of our times, Sri Aurobindo, seems to be a very 'natural' task. That no one has done it so far can be attributed to the paucity of Marathi-speaking Aurobindonians. R. Y. Deshpande has done this admirably well in his short treatise, *The Wager of Ambrosia*.

Deshpande handles the subject essentially from two perspectives: Jnaneshwar first as a poet-yogi and secondly as a metaphysician. The appreciation of the poetic qualities of *Jnaneshwari* is followed by ample quotations from *Jnaneshwari* with remarkably good English translations. *Jnaneshwari* being a poetic commentary on the Gita, relevant quotations from the Gita are also given to facilitate understanding, from Anilbaran's compilation of Sri Aurobindo's English translation.

Jnaneshwar was—or so it seems—an outright Shankarite as far as his metaphysics is concerned. This stands somewhat in disagreement with his poetry where he has often attended to the reality of the personal Divine in relation to Arjuna, has spoken again and again of Divine Grace, the grace of the Guru and so on. Deshpande explains this apparent incongruence in the following words: "We should remember that the scriptural poetry is never a metaphysical treatise.... The language of the poet which is always a suggestive language does not necessarily bind him to any specific system of philosophy and it is his Word of Revelation alone which we must accept." (p. 40)

Saint Jnaneshwar is traditionally known for the realisation of both impersonal and personal aspects of the Nirguna and Saguna, निर्गुण-सगुण, Qualityless and with Quality. This is also evidenced in many of the Saint's *Abhangas* or devotional poems, as for example:

तुज सगुण म्हणों की निर्गुण रे। सगुण निर्गुण एकु गोविंदु रे॥
तुज सूक्ष्म म्हणों की स्थूल रे। स्थूल सूक्ष्म एकु गोविंदु रे॥

Reference could have been made in Deshpande's book to Abhangas of the type above, so as to indicate the integral character of Sant Jnaneshwar's realisation; such mention could have supported Deshpande's thesis where he concludes that although Sant Jnaneshwar's metaphysics pertained to passive Brahman alone, that is to say entirely to the Shankarite tradition, in *Jnaneshwari* "The Yogi stands taller in him than the Advaitic thinker." (p. 100) A very sound conclusion indeed.

Deshpande then brings out the unparalleled lyrical qualities of *Jnaneshwari*, its similes, metaphors, word-music and rhythm. For this again he has given several beautiful examples. However, the typically Aurobindonian 'overhead' touch to *Jnaneshwari* is difficult to judge and must necessarily remain, at least for the present, a subjective judgement.

The last chapter, *Jnaneshwari—some perspectives*, touches upon some interesting aspects like expurgation of spurious material from the text, etc. The author rounds off with extracts from well-known Marathi works on *Jnaneshwari*. This chapter too makes very interesting reading.

Deshpande calls his book *The Wager of Ambrosia*, a phrase taken from *Jnaneshwari* itself. It is hoped that this work will enable students of literature to enjoy a few drops of Ambrosia itself and thereby impel them to undertake fresh rewarding studies in this timeless creation.

A. D. SAVARDEKAR

Musings on the Mother's Prayers and Meditations, Vol. 3, by *Shyam Kumari*. Pub.: Vraja Trust, 22 Lally Tolendal Street, Pondicherry 605001. Pages: xiv + 348. Price: Rs. 250. (Available with the publisher as well as SABDA and VAK.)

Shyam Kumari's three Volumes of *Musings* form a compendium of her expositions of the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*. It is her crowning achievement for which no praise is enough for *Musings* speaks for itself. What is here are the symphonies of her heart, lived and experienced in the moments of Divine ecstasy. This compendium consists of 306 essays comprising three Volumes of 93, 112 and 101 musings which have perfect unity in their distinctness. They are her offerings to the Divine Mother in the form of *shraddha suman* (Flowers of Faith) at Her feet.

It is imperative to know in what light one should go through this compendium of the authoress's musings. There is going to be a big change in the years to come for which the collectivity should be ready. 'Age-long fossilised' religions have outlived their utility. Something new needs to be ushered into the domain of spirituality. It was for this that the twin Avatars of Supermind, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, descended from heaven and hewed a new path for humanity and the coming generations of a new race. They gave to the world a new yoga known as Integral Yoga which embraces all life. Sri Aurobindo's first tenet is that 'All life is Yoga.' It embraces all activities. Do we do yoga for ourselves?

No. It is Mother Nature who is doing Yoga for all of us. It is since time immemorial that she is doing it for all living beings. From the very stage of fish and plankton she has brought us to this stage of a mental being. Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere that he is not satisfied with the 'present man'. Humanity has to exceed itself and it is for this that the whole collectivity has to collaborate with Mother Nature. At present she is doing yoga unconsciously but what Nature wants from us is conscious collaboration. This was the purpose for which the twin Avatars of Supermind worked and made the Supramental force descend on Earth. (It is working and has enveloped the whole of Earth's atmosphere ever since 29 February 1956.)

Since Shyam Kumari's *Musings* are on the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*, it will not be out of place to see what Sri Aurobindo has said about prayer in *Savitri*. He writes:

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.¹

No elaboration of these lines is required, for the meaning is so very explicit. When all human efforts fail, prayer to the Divine comes to one's aid. Humans may raise the question. Do all prayers get answered? According to Sri Aurobindo the Divine is not obliged to answer everybody's prayers; at the same time all sincere prayers are answered. The aforesaid lines speak of sincere prayers only. The *Musings* are about the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* which She made to the Lord for Her human children to raise them from their fallen state. Yet, there may arise another question in the minds of the readers. Did the Lord answer all her prayers? The answer to this question is that those who read these *Musings* shall find their own answer and all their queries will be satisfied and qualms silenced.

Our Divine Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* is a new Testament which She has left for Her children. The language of *Prayers and Meditations* seems so simple but the meaning is very deep. Shyam Kumari in her exposition to which she has given the name *Musings* has made a wonderful elaboration of the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* in three volumes. Before anything is written about these inspired volumes, let us know as to what the Mother has said about Her own book. She emphasises:

This book is meant for those who aspire for an utter consecration to the Divine.²

It is in the light of the aforesaid quotation of the Mother that we shall see what each volume of this compendium which may be called a New Bible of the 'Prayers of Integral Yoga' speaks.

In Volume One of the authoress's *Musings*, there are 93 essays. The destined meeting between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took place in the secluded city of Pondicherry

on 29 March 1914 at 3.30 p.m. in the Guest House where Sri Aurobindo was living at that time. He had already arrived in Pondicherry on 4 April 1910. The Avatar had to wait for about four years for the arrival of Aditi, the Shakti whose collaboration He very much needed for the work for which He had taken birth. In Her prayer of 30 March 1914 the Mother records:

It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.³

This meeting of the two Avatars of Supermind was a great event in the spiritual history of the world, nay, even in the history of evolution. The Mother had put a seal upon the unwritten charter of transformation of the earthlings. It was a great assurance that a new dawn was in the offing, howsoever dense the darkness might be. What is expected of us is that we must keep our faith alive and believe that it is always darkest before dawn. The authoress closes the first Volume—and it would be befitting to quote her words—“In thankfulness we can offer our adoration and gratitude to the two Avatars in the Mother’s own words with which she ended this great prayer.” Her closing lines are as follows:

O Lord Divine, Builder of the marvel, my heart overflows with joy and gratitude when I think of it, and my hope has no bounds.

My adoration is beyond all words, my reverence is silent.⁴

Whereas the authoress’s first Volume closes with the Mother’s prayer of 30 March, 1914 and the aforesaid words of adoration to the Lord, her second Volume begins with the Mother’s prayer of April 1, 1914. The fateful meeting of the Avatars of Supermind had completely changed the scenario of the world. The Mother always has Her rightful place in the Sanctum Sanctorum (Sanctuary) of the Lord. But the event marks a beginning of a new era for which Sri Aurobindo waited for about four years. This first sojourn of the Mother with Sri Aurobindo lasted from 29 March 1914 up to 22 February, 1915 when She had to leave Pondicherry, because of the outbreak of the First World War that began in 1914. But during this short stay of Hers, a firm foundation was already laid for the future of humanity which the anti-Divine forces could not undo. It is this record we find in Shyam Kumari’s 112 essays of the second Volume.

In Musing No. 1 of Volume 2, under the caption ‘After this Meeting’, the authoress quotes the Mother’s words of Her prayer of 1 April 1914 which are as follows:

I feel we have entered the very heart of Thy sanctuary and grown aware of Thy very will. A great joy, a deep peace reign in me, and yet all my inner constructions have vanished like a vain dream and I find myself now, before Thy immensity, without a frame or system, like a being not yet individualised. All the past in its external form seems ridiculously arbitrary to me, and yet I know it was useful in its own time.⁵

These words of the Mother are so meaningful for all the aspiring sadhaks of this Yoga. They teach us how necessary it is for us to erase all the past and begin anew. Our Divine Mother, in one sweep, gave up all the treasures of Her past Sadhana and surrendered to the Lord. Her closing sentence is like an epitome and conceals much more than what it reveals:

But now all is changed: a new stage has begun.⁶

On this closing sentence of the prayer, the authoress's words need to be cited:

Then what have we to which we should cling? One has to renounce all to gain All.⁷

In her Musing No. 42 of Volume 2, entitled 'The Golden Womb', the authoress describes how the foundation of the Golden Future of humanity was laid during the short sojourn of the Mother which did not last even for one year. She writes:

During the momentous months—March 29, 1914, to February 22, 1915,—of the Mother's first visit to Pondicherry was laid the secure foundation of the supramental yoga. Sri Aurobindo had found the way of his spiritual ascension blocked for four years. With the Mother's advent the blocks were removed and new vistas glimpsed and, once the Force of the Lord was joined by that of his shakti, the supramental descent became a certainty. This fact is chronicled in vivid detail in the prayer written by the Mother during that period.⁸

A saint has said that in the domain of material achievement man's destiny (*bhagya*) is the King and his or her Effort (Purushartha) is the Minister but once one enters the domain of spirituality or the path of Yoga, the very order is reversed. On the path of Yoga Effort or Askesis (Purushartha) becomes the King and Destiny (*bhagya*) becomes the Minister. That is why the realised saints who were cobblers, weavers and even meat-sellers could gain the Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth. Sri Aurobindo has said about Sri Ramakrishna (who was the incarnation of both Pure mind and Overmind) that 'he took the Kingdom of God as if by storm'. What was his greatest virtue? It was his perfect surrender to the Divine. In 'Divine Dispensation', the authoress elaborates the same point in beautiful words. She writes:

The Supreme is a prize anyone can dare to win. Worship and devotion are the birth-right of each human. We are free to choose our deity. We may worship money, name, fame, family, country or any other lesser cause. But if we choose to worship the Divine and to do our utmost to see him, to merge in him, then we can annul bad Karma and hijack a future greatness and make it our present.⁹

Neither the Mother's *Prayers* can be graded nor the authoress's *Musings*, but in some of

her essays she has given beautiful revelations about the Mother's deep meanings of Her *Prayers and Meditations* which could not have come to light had she not expounded those verities which our Divine Mother meant to be understood only by the very few deserving aspirants and she is one of them who is among the blessed ones who were very close to Her. Her essays entitled 'Constancy', 'The Refrain', 'The Call', 'The Greatest', 'Those Terrible Days', 'A Chapter of History', 'The Travail', 'Endless Progression', 'The Double Destruction', 'Transmutation', 'Beyond the Beyond' and the 'Flame' which are landmarks in Volume 2 need more emphasis than the rest.

The last two essays of Volume 2 are companion essays which reveal all the Statuses of the Divine Mother—the Individual, the Universal and the Transcendental Being. An incarnation of the Supermind, She, at Her will, when the occasion demanded, could switch over from the Individual to the Universal and from the Universal to the Transcendental; but for Her human children in the Ashram, She was always the Individual concealing Her Divinity. In essay No. 111, the authoress reveals, and quotes from the works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, that the Mother also had Her fourth status which Nolini termed "beyond the beyond". About this status he writes:

...it is the relation between the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother in itself apart from their purpose in manifestation; it is their own "Lila" between themselves, exclusively their own.¹⁰

With a view to purifying the dross and slag left from the Inconscient and Ignorance, the Mother unites the Universal with the Transcendent. In Her *prayer* of 14 September 1914 she records:

A mighty canticle of fervent love and exultation arises to Thee, O Lord, all the earth in an inexpressible ecstasy unites with Thee.

Let the potent breath feed the brazier, that it may become ever vaster and more formidable, that all darkness and blind resistance may be absorbed, set ablaze, transfigured into Light in the marvellous purifying flame.

Oh the peace-giving splendour of Thy Purification!¹¹

By the power of Her askesis, the Mother had become a burning brazier of purifying fire, hence to the last Musing of Volume 2 the authoress has given the caption 'Flame'. With the following paragraph she closes her second Volume. She writes:

The Mother shifts in an instant from one status to another, identifying herself with the Transcendent and then having attempted all, done all, suffered all, she turns towards the Beyond—to her own lila with the Supreme Lord, as seen in the preceding prayer (of September 13, 1914).

The finite merges with the Infinite, the temporal in the Timeless and all is absorbed in the Ineffable, the Beyond.¹²

The authoress's Volume 3 consists of 101 Musings out of which 41 Musings are written on those prayers of the Mother when She was in Pondicherry during Her first stay. Then there are 55 Musings on those prayers which were written when She went back to France and then to Japan. There are the last 5 Musings on those prayers which the Mother wrote after Her final return to Pondicherry, on 24 April 1920. It is only an arbitrary division and should not be considered that the authoress means it so. It will only help the readers to understand what kind of ordeal our Divine Mother faced and how did she combat with the diabolical (asuric) forces and finally paved the way for Her human children. In these 41 Musings we get the glimpses of Her short period of stay with Sri Aurobindo when She laid the firm foundation of the future of humanity.

It has already been said that no categorisation can be made of the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* but some are more integral than others and need mention. There are two prayers of the Mother, one of 11 January 1915 and the other of 17 January 1915. The authoress has dealt with these under the captions 'Her Mission' and 'The Supreme Mediatrix'. In Musing No. 37, Her Mission, she tells us about the mission of the Mother for which She had descended from Heaven and undertaken the most impossible task of divinising matter. She writes:

The stupendous task of world redemption, the unimaginable undertaking of divinising Matter—this has been the mission of our Mother on this earth. Her silent, crushing, protracted, near impossible tapasya, which began in her early childhood and took a conscious shape in her youth, was continued here in Pondichery for the rest of her life, except for an interregnum of five years when she had to leave India.¹³

The Mother accepted Her Mission and went on working, till the last moment of Her life, with perfect resignation to the Divine Will. In Her prayer She records:

May Thy will be done, O Lord—done integrally. It is my happiness and my law.¹⁴

In her essay 'The Supreme Mediatrix', the authoress reveals how our Divine Mother prepared Herself to play the role of the World Redeemer. It is an interpretation of the Mother's prayer of 17 January 1915. She writes:

In this historic testament of January 17, 1915 the Mother gave us a glimpse of the supreme means of sadhana. Sadhana in a sense is a battle constantly waged by us, for the Divine's victory in ourselves and in the world. She pointed out the difference between the Divine law "in its purest and highest present expression" and the Divine law "as it is now being accomplished."¹⁵

The authoress concludes her essay with (a small paragraph of) one sentence:

On that great day was thus taken the resolution for the transformation of the earth.¹⁶

The Divine Mother was 'surrender incarnate'. In Her last prayer of the period of Her first sojourn in Pondicherry, dated 15 February 1915, She writes:

O Lord, this being made of dust prostrates itself before Thee praying to be consumed with the fire of the Truth that it may henceforth manifest only Thee.¹⁷

It is a great lesson in surrender to the Divine, a lesson for all of us who are aspirants on this path of Yoga which our Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo have hewed for us to tread. They were 'One Consciousness' living in two bodies, one as the Lord and the other as the Supreme Mother. If we aspire to be one with the Divine, the only path leading to him is of absolute surrender. It will lead us upwards. In her essay 'Upwards' which is an explication of the Mother's prayer of 15 February 1915 the authoress concludes:

Supreme consummation is the sure reward of a sincere surrender.¹⁸

Then came the day of Parting for the Mother from Sri Aurobindo. On 22 February 1915 She had to leave Pondicherry for France owing to the outbreak of the First World War. There were occult reasons for it. From France She went to Japan and lived there for a couple of years. This period of Her 'exile' lasted for more than five years till She finally returned to Pondicherry on 24 April 1920. During the period of Her 'harsh solitude', Her sadhana for the transformation of earth went on unabated. All this is well revealed in Her 55 Prayers, beginning from 3 March 1915 up to 3 September 1919. The authoress has made a wonderful revelation of the hidden mysteries of these Prayers of the Mother and of the ordeals that She faced. Some of them need special mention. According to the authoress the 'three prayers of March 3, 4 and 7 are the most poignant of all'. She has dealt with these prayers under the captions 'The Parting', 'The Torch-Bearer' and 'A God's Labour' and has made wonderful explications of the same.

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had acquired by the power of their askesis a 'calm of mind' with which they acted for the redemption of the earth and their human children. Sri Aurobindo in His poem *A God's Labour* writes:

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.¹⁹

The Mother also voices the same in Her prayer of 7 March 1915, having been overwhelmed by 'an irremedial sorrow'. She by the power of Her innate Divinity immediately took possession of Herself and then writes:

But it refuses to despair, it refuses to believe the misfortune is irreparable, it waits with humility in an obscure and hidden effort and struggle for the breath of Thy

perfect joy to penetrate it again. And perhaps each of its modest and secret victories is a true help brought to the earth...²⁰

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother went on working together incessantly for 30 years for the impossible till the time came when Sri Aurobindo withdrew for the same (impossible task) and the Mother continued Her efforts with His help till the 'Golden Day' arrived on 29 February 1956.

Besides, there are some other integral prayers of the Mother which need mention. These prayers are of January 23, 25, 29 and March 27, 1917. The authoress has dealt with them under the captions 'Love and Beauty and Joy', 'Love Divine', 'To Beauty' and 'The Mother and the Supreme'. In these essays she has beautifully explained for the aspirants the in-depth mysteries of the Mother's communion with the Lord. If they are read with sincerity, faith and devotion they have the power to transport oneself out of himself or herself on to the higher planes of consciousness. What else is needed for an aspirant but to rise and rise into the higher domains of consciousness.

Being the Creatrix, the Mother was the incarnation of Truth, Goodness and Beauty (सत्यं शिवम् सुन्दरम्). She had ethereal sun-beauty about which the authoress writes in her essay No. 81, captioned 'To Beauty' as follows:

There was nothing of the *femme fatale* in her. It was not the face that launched a thousand ships; rather, her beauty launched a thousand lives into the fields of Infinity, into the oceans of Eternity.²¹

It is a kind of spiritual allegory which the authoress has used to explain the divine Beauty of the Mother which captured many hearts and made them Her willing prisoners. Who would not like to become such a prisoner?

There are three very important essays in Volume 3 of the *Musings*—essays No. 94, 95 and 96 which describe how our divine Mother completed Her Sadhana while living in Japan and then finally returned to Pondicherry to live with Sri Aurobindo and collaborated with Him for Her human children and their transformation. Even after the withdrawal of Sri Aurobindo on 5 December 1950 Her Sadhana continued till the moment of Her own withdrawal which took place on 17 November 1973. We know about the pain of our physical mother who gives us birth and brings us up in the world, but we hardly know how our Divine Mother worked and took much greater pains for our transformation. This is what the authoress has made clear in her essays of Volume 3 of *Musings*.

What is worth learning by the aspiring souls is the message which the authoress writes:

To be fully effective, to bring the final siddhi, the chariot of our sadhana has to be yoked to the steeds of Grace.²²

Once we have done so then, in the words of the Mother, our journey of life is bound to

become “free from effort or constraint”.

In her essay No. 95, captioned ‘For Thee Alone’, the authoress emphasises the supreme benefit of absolute surrender to the Divine. She closes her essay with a marvellous paragraph of the Mother’s words. She writes:

Each moment let us say with the Mother, “for what Thou hast willed Thou doest it even as Thou hast willed it...”²³

We have with us only five prayers written by the Mother after Her final arrival in Pondicherry. They are, nevertheless, very integral. Out of these, three have the cardinal principles of the Mother’s Testament which the authoress has dealt with in her essays under the captions ‘Carefree’, ‘Nothing’ and ‘The Supreme Mantra’. The content therein is worth assimilating along with the Mother’s words by every aspiring soul who has avowed to tread this supreme path of Integral Yoga.

In Her prayer of May 6, 1927, the Mother has shown us the path as to how an aspiring soul can become carefree. This is what the authoress deals with in her essay under the caption of ‘Carefree’. The Mother in the opening paragraph of Her prayer makes it clear that, unless we leave everything in the hands of the ‘Divine Dispenser’, we can never be happy. She has given the Mantra of becoming perfectly carefree in two words,—that the aspiring soul should leave everything to the ‘Divine Dispenser’. Who are we to decide for ourselves? For those who have come into the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s fold, the authoress gives a beautiful piece of advice in the last sentence of her last paragraph of this essay. She writes:

We have to realise that our Lover is not as exacting as we think. He does not insist on constant success and will accept a sincere failure with equal love. To be able to lay at her feet our numerous insufficiencies, our lacks and drawbacks is a sure way of achieving beatitude, because to be frank and humble is also a need of love. Not to ask her for success or happiness or realisation but to accept joyously whatever she has chosen for us is an act of supreme trust.²⁴

The Mother’s prayer of December 28, 1928 is a reply to many of the ambitions of the materialistic persons who work for worldly achievements. There is no earthly achievement that can give us lasting peace. What the Mother writes in the last paragraph of Her prayer and what the authoress responds to it are worth quoting. What can satisfy us, the Mother writes:

It is the Power, the Happiness, the Light, the Knowledge, the Bliss, the Love, the Peace that flow from the Divine Grace.²⁵

And what becomes the duty of an aspiring soul? The authoress responds:

If we want to realise and hold the substance and the Reality of Life and the world then we will have to invoke and seek the Divine Grace which is the source of things true and great.²⁶

The Mother's last prayer to the Lord was written on 23 October 1937. It is in the form of a 'Supreme Mantra' for the aspiring souls who wish to serve the Divine and if this prayer alone is read everyday it can 'annul the ignorance and efface the darkness of the world', for such is the power of this Mantra.

It may finally and objectively be said that these Supplications of the Divine Mother to the Lord have no parallel in the spiritual history of the world and so are the explications of the authoress in her *Musings* in which she has poured out her heart in the form of her supreme obeisance at the feet of the Divine Mother. She closes the last chapter of her third Volume with a marvellous dedication to the Mother. She writes:

Thou who hast so kindly made us Thine, also make us worthy of Thee. Let us hold the Flame as Thou wantest us to do.

Mould us in the moulds of divinity, cast us in the casts of superhumanity. Take away these rags of incapacities and clothe us in Thy Divine Raiments.²⁷

J.S. TANDON

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THE GOLDEN LIGHT

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